

The Story of District IX

By
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This story is dedicated to all employees of District IX, past and present. They are the ones who have taken unto themselves the admonition of the Prophet Isaiah to "Make Straight in the Desert a Highway."



CONSTRUCTION OVERLOOKING PANAMINT VALLEY

INTRODUCTION

Late in February of 1951, some five months after I took over the pleasant duties as District Engineer at Bishop, I had occasion to attend a meeting of the Lions Club at Lone Pine as the guest of Howard Ellis. During the course of the meeting Howard suggested that I come again and give a talk before the club on the early highway history of the area.

Fearful that he meant what he said I immediately set about to learn a little of this past history for myself. Prior to coming to Bishop on October 1, 1950, I had never set foot in the land embraced by the limits of District IX and knew absolutely nothing of the history and traditions of this beautiful country. What a shock I received in my search for data. There was nothing available in any readable form. Most all of the old records were destroyed. Someone suggested that because of a fire in the Fresno office in 1926 all of the old records were completely lost. A search of the pump house and delving into the back of the boiler room produced a scanty few disconnected fragments of records. Nothing to really sink your teeth into and find a substantial morsel.

Well we knew that things went on in the good old days. The Division of Highways biennial reports told us that much. So we wrote letters to those whom we knew or were told had prominent hands in the early pie. We received a splendid response to our letters together with a lot of data. Letters from J. B. Woodson, C. C. Boyer, Dwight Wonacott, Spence Lowden, Pres Fite, Eddie Carter and Dick Badger were lengthy and full of meat. Some of the dates they quoted were off slightly but with what else we had the correct dates slipped into place in a hurry. Dick Badger even made a trip to Bishop to subscribe his help. The word was out that we wanted data and my how it poured in. Now we had more than would logically make a 20 minute speech but these data were too valuable to throw away or to store up and thus become eligible for building material for Bishop mice.

To write the Story of District IX in the form of a book looked like a very formidable task, which it was, but it early became evident that by the very fact of writing down what went on and when, I was getting a personal insight into the highway happenings that could scarcely be obtained in years of just reading or having someone tell me about it. It has already paid dividends in the administrative work. Already one speech has been given on early highway history but alas, not yet before the Lone Pine Lions Club.

The Chalfant Press at Bishop, through the back issues of the Inyo Register, has aided immensely in getting forth the actual background for so much that was done and in supplying dates to fit in with other information. Publisher Todd Watkins was extremely cooperative. Dorothy Sherwin Vellom did the newspaper research and because of her intimate knowledge of the country and the people my task was made so much easier. Martha Sangster McFarland who is probably the Staff employee with the longest District career supplied many a vital bit of information as did Glenn Compton. Art Hess supplied some of the photos.

Just enough information was abstracted from Division of Highways biennial reports to tie together the Statewide picture with the highway happenings in District IX.



Then

Early Desert Trail



Now

Modern Desert Highway

THE STORY OF DISTRICT IX

BOOK ONE

EL CAMINO SIERRA

State Highway District No. IX was born on October 11, 1923. The highways within the limits of District IX were, however, no swaddling infants then as they, for the most part, were a portion of the original State highway system as laid out in the latter part of the year 1911. For nearly 12 years the highways of District IX were fathered and nurtured by the engineers of District VI in Fresno who were first charged with the responsibilities of the State highways in the Inyo-Mono region.

While the peoples of the land east of the Sierras are not as numerous as those elsewhere in California, these inhabitants of the "Land of Little Rain" are just as intense, just as steadfast of purpose and just as civic and highway minded as their brethren in the more populated areas.

The main traveled way in Inyo-Mono is now designated as U.S. 395 and is the economic life line of this area. U.S. 395, also colorfully termed the Three Flags Highway, traverses the United States from the south in Mexico to a northerly terminal in Canada. The Owens Valley and the Mono Mountains lie athwart of this Royal Road to Romance. There are no railroads in Mono County. Inyo County was never adequately serviced by the combination broad and narrow gauge railroad.

From the earliest times this area had only its trails for transportation. The early miners, the cattlemen, the soldiers and the Indians traveled up and down the valleys, passes and hillsides and in time a path was beaten along the shortest routes between the many settlements that existed before the turn of the century. Widening out of these paths for wagon use caused the first roads to come into being.

These dirt roads were adequate for wagon traffic. High centers of gravity, large wheels, and generally slow speed provided no particular cause for complaint if the roads were narrow or had high ridges between the wheel tracks. Nevertheless a persistent barrier to wagon traffic existed in these days in the formidable Sherwin Hill located in Mono County just over the line from Inyo County and at the northerly end of the Owens Valley. A road was actually constructed by J. L. C. Sherwin over the hill which bears his name and toll was charged for the right to travel over this new road. As a road for wagons it was adequate and at least did provide for a means of transporting goods from one county to the other.

With the advent of the 20th Century came the automobile. As the horseless carriages became numerically prominent so did the agitation for good roads become prominent. The old narrow, dusty in summer, muddy in winter, high centered, rutted roads just would not provide a suitable platform for the new gasoline runabouts.

Characteristically the people of California started in to do something about this problem rather than talk about it or to bemoan the situation. In the Legislative session of 1909 an act was passed calling for a bond issue of \$18,000,000 for the purpose of acquiring and constructing a State Highway System. Governor Gillette signed this act and it went to the people of the State of California for ratification at the general election of November 1910.

The die was now cast and it was up to the people themselves to decide whether or not they wanted good roads.

The people east of the Sierras were not long in making up their minds just what they wanted. On April 20, 1910 the Inyo Good Road Club was formally launched. The meeting convened in the Bishop Town Trustees' room and proceeded to elect the following officers:

President
Vice Presidents

Recording Secretary
Corresponding Secretary
Treasurer

Consulting Engineers

Dr. G. P. Doyle
L. C. Hall- Bishop
E. H. Edwards- Lone Pine
Dr. C. E. Turner- Big Pine
F. M. Hess
W. Gillette Scott
M. Q. Watterson

A. M. Strong
W. H. Leffingwell
B. E. Sherwin

Honorary memberships were tendered to Governor Gillette, State Engineer N. Ellery, Surveyor General W. S. Kingsbury; A. A. Hubbard, President Los Angeles Board of Public Works; L. P. Lowe, President California Auto Association; A. C. Briggs and Kirke Simpson, Manager and Editor of Pacific Motor Magazine.

At the time of its organization this club had 62 energetic and active members on its roll. The avowed purposes of the club included the building and maintenance of a first class thoroughfare across the desert to the south to the town of Mojave and to secure for this area a share of the State's \$18,000,000 fund should it be voted.

Corresponding Secretary W. Gillette Scott was publically credited with the formation of the general plan of the Inyo Good Road Club and is further the author of the name "El Camino Sierra"

which was then applied to the proposed highway running north and south from Mojave on the south through Little Lake, Olancho, Lone Pine, Independence, Big Pine, Bishop, Leevining and Bridgeport to the connection with the Sonora Pass road on the north.

To show that their interest in roads was genuine the citizens of Big Pine and Bishop spent several days improving the 15 miles between these centers of population. Their activities were recorded in the April 28, 1910 issue of the Inyo Register under the heading "Road Fixing" -

"Some of Big Pine's energetic citizens have made a marked improvement in the road between that place and Bishop. Their holidays have been spent in autoing in this direction and clearing the road of stones for almost half the distance.

"A similar expedition left Bishop Sunday and toiled all day on the highway just for fun. W. W. Watterson's Mitchell and U. G. Smith's Buick cars were met by John Kispert in his Ford machine. The whole turnout included U. G. Smith, Dr. Turner, J. H. Kispert, F. M. Hess, Dr. McQueen, J. H. Bulpitt, Wm. Eva, Clay Hampton, Otto Wise, W. G. Scott, and G. D. Jenkins. P. P. Keough supplied a bountiful lunch for the party. Considerable improvement was made by removal of boulders and obstructions midway between here and Big Pine."

As a consequence of his being tendered an Honorary Membership in the Inyo Good Road Club, Governor Gillette responded to the Club with the following letter:

"I have watched with great interest the action taken by the people in one county for good roads and I want to compliment them for so doing.

"The question of good roads is one of the most important that our State now has before it and I know of no state that would be more benefited than our own by a system of splendid highways. I am pleased to note the public spirit of your citizens and I wish you success. As the rest of the counties fall in line, California will soon be able to boast of the finest highways in the United States.

Please extend my thanks to your club for the honor which it has conferred upon me and assure them of my best wishes for their success."

All throughout the summer of 1910 the campaign for the Highway Bonds was waged with intense enthusiasm. Sensing perhaps a little more than normal interest in this area by the Governor, he was invited to appear in Inyo County by the Good Road Club to dedicate the proposed El Camino Sierra. In order

to make the invitation carry sufficient weight the Governor was also asked to be present at the Railroad Day Celebration. The Governor accepted these invitations and promised to attend. However, the railroad was not completed so that the final spike driving ceremony could be held thus postponing that part of the celebration until a later date.

Thus it was that Governor Gillette visited Inyo County and became the first governor of California to set foot in this portion of the Golden State. He arrived by special train at Mojave on August 30 and, accompanied by proper pomp and circumstance, was taken by motor caravan to the city of Lone Pine for the night.

The Governor was presented with a genuine key of massive proportions signifying the Freedom of the Owens Valley. This key was more than a foot long. The end of the handle was a horseshoe of good luck while the open end was closed by a representation of the pinnacles of Mt. Whitney with Inyo's golden sun surmounting the pinnacles. From the key's shank hung a silver plate shaped like the Good Road Club's emblem of a hunting horn enclosed in a circle. On this plate the date and occasion were suitably engraved.

It was noted that amongst the favors, gifts and entertainment features showered upon the Governor and his party a liberal supply of watermelons had been provided.

On the following day the most significant event of the Governor's trip took place. This occurred at the Fred Eaton poultry ranch a few miles south of Big Pine. This ranch had often been described as the "greatest poultry farm in the United States." Mr. Eaton had personally built a wide stretch of model road running for about 1-1/4 miles in front of his ranch.

The old road ran west of his ranch along the edge of the rocks. Jess Chance, now a prominent Inyo County Hereford breeder, tells of how, as a young man, he spent many long hours pulling up and hauling away alfalfa roots in order to build this stretch of road.

On the occasion of this day's gathering a metal placque was to be unveiled to mark the fact of the first work done on El Camino Sierra. Governor Gillette ceremoniously loosed the flag which concealed the marker and in solemn proclamation proclaimed this highway to be "El Camino Sierra."

The metal sign bore an appropriate inscription and was set on a monument of ore containing over 100 specimens of ore which were donated by Big Pine miners.



*Site of Beginning of
El CAMINO SIERRA*

*Eaton Ranch
South of Big Pine*



An official photograph of this gathering was taken at this historic location by a member of the Governor's party. This photograph was presented to the Inyo Good Road Club by Governor Gillette who in turn had it suitably framed and hung the picture in the most prominent position in the Board of Supervisors' room at the Court House in Independence.

The road as built by Fred Eaton is clearly shown in the photo and was indeed a wide stretch of model road.

At the dedicatory banquet held in Bishop that evening Doctor Doyle, President of the Inyo Good Road Club, paid high tribute to the Governor and went on to say that it was a red letter day in the history of Inyo; it was rediscovered that day, for the first time in local history a Governor of the State had shown sufficient interest to visit the county and the improvements ahead of us would be great indeed.

El Camino Sierra is a name beautifully expressive. Literally translated it means "high road range of the mountains," a liberal rendition of which is "mountain highway." Perhaps because the highway south of Bishop is more desert than mountain accounts for the fact that this beautiful original name has fallen to disuse.

At the general election of November 1910 the highway bonds just barely carried the State showing that at that time the people of California were just a little on the fence, not exactly sure of what it was they wanted. This, however, was the last time that such indecision was to face the California voter and motorist. The vote in Los Angeles County alone was 3 to 1 against the bonds! In Inyo County there were 442 votes for and 118 votes against the bonds while in Mono County the vote count was 84 for and 29 against. The total vote in the entire state was 93,297 for and 80,509 against, providing only a bond plurality of 12,786 votes.

It was a sad commentary to his many friends in Inyo-Mono that Governor Gillette was unseated in the November election by a young man named Hiram Johnson.

From the time of the passage of the highway bonds in November 1910 until August 1911 there was no concrete evidence of specific action on highway matters. All during the spring and summer of 1911 however the Secretary of the Inyo Good Road, W. Gillette Scott, was an indefatigable worker for Inyo and Mono counties. A frequent visitor in Sacramento he appeared before various legislative committees and was tireless in promoting El Camino Sierra before all persons concerned with the administration of the new highway program. Scott's voice in behalf of El Camino Sierra was also heard in the Los Angeles area and in the national headquarters of various automobile

clubs and good road clubs. Mr. Scott gave generously of his time for the cause he so seriously championed and future gains for this area can be largely laid to the eternal credit of this man. Even though W. Gillette Scott was the only paid employee of the Inyo Good Road Club he still put in more time and energy than his salary ever warranted.

This highway act of 1910 provided that the State highway system should be acquired and constructed by the Department of Engineering and the routes selected and laid out so as to constitute a continuous and connected State highway system running north and south traversing the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys and along the coast by the most practical routes, connecting the several county seats and joining the centers of population, together with such lateral roads as might be necessary to connect the north and south arterials with the county seats lying east and west of such highways, and also to connect with the chief transcontinental routes entering California.

It was the mandate of the act that the system be constructed and acquired by the State Department of Engineering. This department consisted, however, of only an advisory board composed of the Governor, the State Engineer, the Superintendent of State hospitals and the Chairman of the State Board of Harbor Commissioners. The functions of this board were advisory in nature as obviously their members were engrossed with the regular duties of their respective offices. Therefore, in order to make the original act workable, the State Legislature in 1911 added three more members to the Department of Engineering with the tacit understanding that they would do the actual work of organizing and running the State Highway System.

Messrs. Charles D. Blaney of Saratoga, Burton A. Towne of Lodi, and Newell D. Darlington of Los Angeles were, in 1911, appointed by Governor Hiram W. Johnson to be the three working members. At a meeting of the advisory board, held in August 1911, an enabling resolution designating Messrs. Blaney, Towne and Darlington, the three appointed members, as an executive committee to be known as the California Highway Commission and vesting in such committee the actual handling of the work of constructing and acquiring the State highway system under the bond issue of 1910, was adopted.

The California Highway Commission thereupon organized and Burton A. Towne was chosen to be the first chairman. A. B. Fletcher, appointed by Governor Johnson as State Highway Engineer of California, became the executive officer of the Commission, Wilson R. Ellis, the secretary, and C. C. Carleton the attorney.

In the fall of 1911 the members of the Commission, together with the State Highway Engineer, made a comprehensive tour of the state in order to obtain firsthand impressions of the routes to be followed and the needs of the people of the respective communities.

Apparently this tour of the newly formed State Highway Commission did not include the area east of the Sierras as no notices or stories appeared in the local publications concerning this tour.

In September the Inyo County Board of Supervisors received a letter from the California Highway Commission asking their hearty cooperation and requesting that the Board submit a map of the county drawn to a scale of 1/2" to the mile and indicating thereon the route or routes most desired for the highway system with such supplemental data as available on valuation, population, etc.

The noted author Peter B. Kyne made a trip through the Inyo-Mono area with W. Gillette Scott and Kyne's colorful language was preserved through a newspaper article which quoted him as follows:

"Prior to embarking with Mr. Scott behind his two faithful 'desert birds' I was conceited enough to imagine that I knew my California thoroughly. I did not know that in one day's travel it was possible for one to traverse mountains, desert, meadow, valleys and lake shore, scattered in such delightful chaos. From a scenic standpoint one is first appalled at the aching desolation and the next a miracle is wrought and he is enchanted with a landscape to be found nowhere else on earth. I am a convert to the El Camino Sierra magic. By all means let us see California first and let the Alps and Europe go until we get acquainted with the wonders of the land we live in. I feel confident that the efforts of the Inyo Good Road Club to secure an appropriation from the \$18,000,000 fund of the Highway Commission will be productive of success."

In December 1911, the California Highway Commission determined to establish seven division offices in different parts of the state, each in charge of a division engineer, and the following appointments of division engineers were made and branch offices established: Francis G. Somner, Willits; T. A. Bedford, Redding; Wm. S. Caruthers, San Luis Obispo; J. B. Woodson, Fresno; and W. Lewis Clark, Los Angeles.

Included in the original State Highway System was El Camino Sierra from the Kern-Inyo County line on the south to Bridgeport on the north, a total distance of 220 miles. This area was placed under the ~~Fresno~~ Fresno office, Division VI, for administration purposes.

It is to be noted that while that portion of El Camino Sierra south of the Kern-Inyo County line on to Los Angeles was a part of the State highway system administered out of the Los Angeles office, there was no State highway north of Bridgeport. Thus the system was a dead end one in this area. To obtain public sympathy for extending the highway northerly that tireless proponent of El Camino Sierra, W. Gillette Scott, proposed a Pasear which was described in the local press in the following manner: "W. G. Scott, indefatigable in the interest of good roads and of El Camino Sierra proposes a trip to be known as the 'Pasear' as a feature of the Panama Pacific Exposition. His proposition, issued in the name of the Inyo Good Road Club, is receiving favorable and extended mention in Sacramento and San Francisco papers. The full name given to the trip is 'Pasear les Tres Camino.' From Oakland as a starting point it is over El Camino Capital through Sacramento to Tahoe, thence to Bridgeport, over El Camino Sierra through Owens Valley to Los Angeles, thence over El Camino Real up the coast to Oakland again.....it but puts into concrete form one of the reasons for the construction of El Camino Sierra, the use of that highway by motorists who wish to see California."

Scott's promotional tour came off in grand style during June and July 1912. The tourists who comprised the Pasear were duly impressed with Inyo's scenic attractions and pledged untiring support for this proposed scenic highway. Reams of publicity were written during the course of the trip to inform the rest of the world of Inyo's magnificent wonderland.

The first State highway construction project was let to contract, Contract No. 1, under date of July 23, 1912 for paving from south San Francisco to Burlingame. It was to be some time yet however before the first State highway construction project would be underway east of the Sierras.

The original policy of the California Highway Commission was to request the counties to build all of the necessary bridges and to provide all required right of way for the proposed new State highways. It is interesting to note the language of Inyo County's enabling resolution dated March 5, 1912: "Whereas, a letter from the California Highway Commission having been received by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Inyo, State of California, requesting said Board to adopt a resolution agreeing to furnish to the State of California free right of way and to build all necessary bridges along the route of any proposed State highway which may be constructed through said county.

"And, whereas, said Board is of the opinion and believes the construction of the said proposed State highway into Inyo County will be of great and lasting benefit to said

county and the inhabitants thereof can well afford to furnish free of charge to said State all right of way and bridging for the construction and maintenance of said proposed State highway, now

"Therefore, be it resolved by this Board that if said proposed State highway be constructed and maintained through the county of Inyo, they will furnish free of charge to said State of California right of way and bridges necessary for the use and maintenance of said proposed State highway."

Signed - N. J. Cooley
James McBride
R. E. Thomas
S. H. Reynolds
J. C. Anton

Automobile traffic was increasing in Inyo County in spite of the lack of good, hard surfaced roads it being reported that in May 1912 there were between 60 and 80 automobiles at large in the county. Their number and the carelessness shown by some drivers (ever then as now) pointed out the necessity of enforcing State and local regulations for safety.

During the summer of 1912 a delegation of highway enthusiasts from Goldfield and Tonopah in neighboring Nevada came over Montgomery Pass and met with the Inyoites in the interests of promoting a paved transcontinental auto route. This route was the forerunner of present route U.S. 6 between Bishop and Tonopah.

Although no State highways were actually constructed in 1912 meetings to stimulate plans and ideas were held throughout the valley. To show that there is nothing new under the sun, at a meeting held in Big Pine it was stated that "no one in Big Pine will tolerate a line elsewhere than through the main street of the town!!!!"

An invitation was extended to the California Highway Commission to visit the Owens Valley during the harvest festival of 1912 but the Commission found it necessary to decline the invitation.

The year 1913 was practically a duplicate of 1912 insofar as highway activities were concerned. No survey or construction work was undertaken on the State highways. Various meetings were held and publicity programs were carried out.

During the legislative session of 1913 an attempt was made to obtain a special appropriation of \$100,000 for surveys and construction from Bridgeport to Independence. This measure passed the Assembly but was killed in Senate Committee.

The 1913 Legislature did, however, pass a comprehensive act providing for the registration of motor vehicles and for the licensing of motor vehicle operators. This act also provided that one half of the revenues obtained from these licenses and registrations should go to a fund to be used for the maintenance of State highways. Thus as the State advanced its construction program the fact of the necessity of the future maintenance of these roads was recognized and provision made to meet this obligation on a continuing basis.

W. Gillette Scott came into his own in April 1913 when as the "Man of the Hour" for Inyo County he was the honored guest at a banquet and reception given for him at Big Pine. Too often local petty jealousies prevent the honors justly due a citizen for selfless service to his community. It was gratifying that this measure of reward was tendered W. Gillette Scott.

In December 1913 it was announced that the Automobile Club of Southern California would sign the Owens River Valley from Los Angeles to Lake Tahoe, a distance of some 400 miles. This would be the longest piece of road ever marked by a motor organization and would require more than 800 signs to complete the project according to Secretary S. C. Geary.

As the year 1914 opened and then crept along toward its end it still appeared that insofar as the State was concerned the land east of the Sierras was a forgotten country. In spite of continued publicity, meetings and visitations, no funds had yet been allocated to this area nor had even a survey party made itself known.

In September it was announced that the California Highway Commission then composed of Messrs. Darlington, Blaney and Charles F. Stern (of Eureka) would visit the Inyo-Mono region to determine what should be done with regard to the State highway.

Dr. Doyle, still President of Inyo Good Road Club, and the indefatigable W. Gillette Scott, still Secretary, told the people of Inyo-Mono that this was a vital and important meeting with respect to securing early assistance from any State highway fund, and that such an inspection tour was the most important development that had yet come forth in the long campaign for the recognition of the needs of eastern California and, more important even though mentioned last, the advantage of the whole State through a properly maintained thoroughfare east of the Sierras was in the balance.

They also advised of the importance of having the right impressions produced at this time; that point could not be too strongly emphasized. The visitors will come to see what nature has provided rather than what man has done.

The California Highway Commission accompanied by State Highway Engineer Austin B. Fletcher did come to the forgotten land in mid-September and were apparently deeply impressed by what they saw as orders were given out to proceed with the orderly development of the State highways in the land beyond the Sierras.

Their orders were duly obeyed. October 28, 1914 marks the actual beginnings of the State highways in Inyo-Mono. On that date Location Engineer C. C. Boyer arrived in Bishop. Mr. Boyer was officially attached to the Division VI office at Fresno and was under the immediate direction of Division Engineer J. B. Woodson.

Mr. Boyer immediately plunged into his work of performing a reconnaissance survey from Independence to Bridgeport.

And so it came to pass that as 1914 bowed itself out the outlook for El Camino Sierra, according to W. Gillette Scott, was pronounced highly encouraging with the highway success assured. There was ample reason to rejoice that the culmination of so many years hard work was in sight.

GETTING STARTED

The arrival of C. C. Boyer in the fall of 1914 started a new era in the highway history east of the Sierras for with his appearance on the scene came concrete evidence of what was to come in the future. Up to this time all highway progress had centered around the politician and the promoters. Many were the words that were spoken, many were the schemes that were hatched and many were the steaks and French fries consumed at innumerable banquets to discuss the highway problems.

Presumably now the time had arrived for action, not words; presumably now the work would be done, however such a head of steam had been worked up by the eastern Sierrans that once having gotten the Highway Commission committed to a route they could not relax but had to continue on with the more minor details of location and construction which would have been better to leave to the unbiased decisions of the road engineers.

In the long run this did not work out to any great disadvantage and was in no particular degree any different than the public reception of the highways and their builders in the balance of the State of California.

During the fall of 1914 Mr. Boyer traveled by buck-board, team and foot from Independence to Bridgeport to determine the most feasible and practical route to be followed by the proposed State highway. His findings were incorporated into a reconnaissance report to his Division Engineer, J. B. Woodson, at Fresno. This comprehensive report was studied during the winter months of 1914-15 and the route which Boyer recommended was adopted for surveys.

While there was little doubt in the minds of the people of the State of California as to which way they were headed in regard to their proposed highway transportation program, there did exist a considerable doubt in the minds of the banking establishments and the financial institutions in the west of California's ability to finance such a program. The people of 1910 had voted \$18,000,000 worth of bonds to pay for materials, contract for equipment, and meet payrolls; the bonds had to be sold to someone who would give the State the cash in return for interest on the bonds. So great did the risk appear that private financial institutions devoted to this type of venture bought up only \$4,280,000 of these 4% interest bonds.

The people of California nevertheless had faith in the people of California and through the various county Boards of Supervisors the balance of the bonds were taken. Mono County bought \$50,000 worth of the bonds and Inyo County bought \$100,000. Such purchases by the counties assured that the highway program would continue and that it would not retreat for lack of sufficient funds to carry on the work.

An interesting sidelight on the financing end concerns the bond purchases by Inyo County. Purportedly the Board of Supervisors anticipated that the funds from the bonds so purchased by them would be expended for highway construction in Inyo County. Although both Inyo and Mono Counties agreed that the most needed improvement in the two county area was the elimination of the tortuous and wholly inadequate wagon road over Sherwin Hill, it did not come to the Inyo Board's attention until the project was well along that all of this grade was in Mono County and that Inyo funds were actually being spent in Mono County.

Boyer's reconnaissance report recommended the route up Sherwin Grade through Long Valley and over Deadman Summit in Mono County rather than north from Bishop via Benton and Mono Mills. This was the route as approved by Division Engineer J. B. Woodson. Such recommendation and approval were, however, not the end of the dispute. Even after the survey party was started the proponents of the Benton-Mono Mills route still raised their collective voices in a storm loud enough to be heard in the distant capitol city. Thus it was that State Highway Engineer Austin B. Fletcher made a special trip to Inyo-Mono in an attempt to finally resolve the question of the route. With Mr. Fletcher came State Highway Commissioner N. D. Darlington. Together they scouted the two routes and answered the question: "Shall the route be a Highway for a small community or a Highway for all?" At a subsequent meeting of the Highway Commission the Commission officially adopted the Long Valley route and thus abruptly put an end to the inter-county dispute.

The highway survey via Long Valley was by this time well underway. This work was put under the direct charge of John Paul Jones. Surveys were run from the Mono County line to as far north as Little Round Valley within which limits lay the formidable Sherwin Hill. A tent camp was erected along the project thus enabling the surveyors to live close to their work. Transportation of men and equipment was done by means of horses and buggies.

Another survey party was at work in Inyo County during this period and was under the immediate direction of Chief of Party B. J. Pardee. Pardee was the son of a former Governor of the State of California. This survey crew was engaged in work primarily between Independence and Big Pine.

While all of this preliminary engineering was going on the people of Inyo-Mono, with customary rural enthusiasm, continued to play their part in actually promoting the highway program. Physically it took the shape of work parties and work days on the route of the proposed highways.

A newspaper article on May 18, 1915 called attention to a road bee to be held on Saturday and invited all pick and shovel experts to be present. The plans were to work that day between Round and Long Valleys and all who cared to might spend the night at Bert Bernard's place at Mammoth. It was stated that Mr. Bernard could provide accommodations for forty people and that supper, bed and breakfast would be furnished free.

Other news items of this period covering private and individual work on the highways included such gems as: "U. G. Smith and fellow rustlers on the committee for improving the Mono Lake Road raised without difficulty the money needed to make a practical connection between the Devil's Punchbowl and the Deadman Creek route. As a result of this campaign Yandell Rowan and Lloyd Smith have started with a six horse outfit apiece to V out the steep sidehill for a distance of 1500 feet. J. S. Cain has started men from the Mono end to build the longer but more level portion on the slope to the lake."

With the completion of the Sherwin Hill area survey in September of 1915, John Paul Jones moved his crew and camp northerly to the vicinity of Crestview where surveys were commenced upon the second formidable undertaking between Bishop and Bridgeport, the so called Deadman cut-off. This survey was to tackle the 8000' summit over Deadman Summit.

At this time another survey party under Chief of Party W. H. Metcalf was busily engaged in running a line from Bishop to the Mono County Line in Round Valley. The new line being surveyed was expected to cut the distance down between these two points by at least two miles as compared to the old wagon road.

The road from Leevining westerly over Tioga Pass and on to Yosemite Valley was a Special Appropriation Road and not a part of the State Highway System. Its upkeep was from special legislative appropriations when the counties were not able to provide the necessary funds for their maintenance and construction. In addition to the Tioga Road, Sonora Pass and the road from Sonora Junction through the West Walker River Canyon to Little Antelope Valley were also in this same category. The administration of these Special Appropriation roads was given to the State Engineer, not to the State Highway Engineer.

On April 21, 1915, W. Gillette Scott was able to announce that the Federal Government had formally assumed title to the Tioga Road and that they would instigate repairs at once so that the road would be opened for tourist traffic from the east motoring to the Panama Pacific Exposition in

San Francisco. This portion of the Tioga Pass road referred to was the portion from the Pass westerly through the Yosemite National Park. From the Pass easterly down Leevining Creek Canyon yet remained under the administration of the State Engineer who started work in June of 1915 to improve this portion of this most scenic road.

SHERWIN HILL

Day Labor Work Order No. D-79 dated October 4, 1915 was the formal authorization for State highway construction between the Inyo-Mono County line and Sherwin Hill, a distance of 5.8 miles, road VI-Mno-23-A.

October 4, 1915 is the date of authorization of work. The day the work actually started is not available from any known records. It is safe to say that on that particular unknown, yet highly historical, day in the highway annals of the Inyo-Mono region, no whistles blew, no speeches were made, no traditional first shovelful of earth was turned nor was there any particular significant event marked for posterity. Very likely work was formally started by some native eastern Sierra Piute driving a team of mules, banging his Fresno scraper into the warm earth on Sherwin Hill.

With his fine sense of the appropriateness of things Division Engineer Woodson assigned to the first State Highway project in this area, as Resident Engineer in charge of construction, the man who actually made the first route and reconnaissance study, Mr. C. C. Boyer. Boyer arrived in Bishop on September 27, 1915 approximately one year after his first arrival in Owens Valley. His originally announced plans were to hire as many local men and teams as available in order to furnish employment to home people. He expressed hopes of completing the grading of about 6 miles of the ten mile section before storms caused a winter shut down. Contemplating a construction project of ten miles, Boyer evidently was anticipating approval of work northerly from Sherwin Hill. Subsequent work orders proved him correct.

Before work could actually start it was necessary to make innumerable arrangements for labor, equipment, stock, fuel, groceries and supplies of all natures. A camp was set up and maintained for the workmen, it being moved from time to time to keep it as close as possible to the job site. When the work site became as far as two and one half to three miles away, camp was moved. Camps were tents; the kitchens and dining rooms were constructed in sections which could be bolted together and then covered with canvas. Boyer, as both Superintendent and Resident Engineer, had his office "under his hat."

In some cases dry camps were established and then it became a necessity to haul water to the camp sites. This was done in wagon tanks hauled by mule teams. All supplies this first fall were hauled to camp by mule teams. Hay and grain available locally were so purchased but all other supplies were either hauled from Bishop or from Laws which was the railroad point of delivery.

The highway which was actually built up Sherwin Hill was mostly on an 8% grade and followed a zig zag development up the slope. Some forty to sixty men were employed in the construction work, all of whom were on the State's payroll. Personnel employed was generally local. A few professional mule skinner who followed railroad and highway work made up the skilled labor contingent. Quite a few local Indians were engaged on this project. Work done in the fall of 1915 was grading and minor drainage structures. Wherever the earth was such that it could be moved with teams and scrapers, that method was used. Because of the general scarcity of pure earth material numerous grade changes were made nearly all of which were raises in grade to avoid heavy rock work.

Rock excavation was done by drilling and blasting; hand drilling was of necessity done. The blasted material was removed by stoneboats and mules and by wheelbarrows. Where no earthy material was encountered for smoothing off the roadbed it was necessary to complete the grade with borrow material wherever it could be found.

For the next 35 years this road as herein described continued to serve ever increasing traffic needs with only surface changes. It is a sincere tribute to our early road builders and a marvel that they could build so well with so little with which to do.

Division Engineer Woodson made periodic trips to the Owens Valley to view the work in progress but more particularly to oversee the advance survey work and to arrange for necessary rights of way for future construction. Woodson was always on the look out for alternate routes whenever it appeared that public objection or condemnations appeared likely. Money spent for right of way didn't appeal to him any more than it does to subsequent engineers. All would rather spend available funds for actual construction.

January 1916's headlines carried forth the news of one of the worst storms in Eastern Sierra history. This storm had the effect of closing down the newly inaugurated highway project for a period of about three months. Four feet of snow on Sherwin's slopes plus extremely cold weather made productive work on the road impossible. It wasn't until late March before the snows had melted and the temperatures risen sufficiently for the highway men to resume their labors.

Work was resumed in the same manner as was in effect before the winter shut down. In April of 1916 the first truck was assigned to this area. It was a two ton truck, chain driven and equipped with solid tires. This truck was put on the Laws-Bishop to camp route carrying needed supplies and materials. The original field book showing the log of trips, type of cargo and cost of repairs is still available and makes interesting reading in itself. The first car assigned to this area was a 4-Door sedan used by Mr. Boyer.

George Wood, a native of Bishop, was the construction foreman under Boyer. The closest that Boyer came to having a right hand man was in the person of Harry Nelson who traveled from camp to camp to check on supplies and make out meal reports. No particular records were kept of the job progress and the final report was largely made up from meal reports, payrolls and material invoices.

By June 1916 the grading and structures were essentially completed to Sherwin Summit. In order to continue on the much needed northerly descent from Sherwin Summit into Rock Creek, Day Labor Work Order No. D-101 was issued under date of April 4, 1916 for 4.8 additional miles. The same crews and camp setup arrangements were used in what amounted to a continuation project northerly under Boyer's direction.

While this extension work was underway funds were made available to Work Order D-79 to provide a penetration oil surfacing to this 5.8 mile section up Sherwin.

Because the Owens Valleyites in their travels northerly could witness the completion of the grading work it was only natural that they should burn with a desire to try out the new road. Boyer found it necessary to appeal to the motorists of that day, through the medium of the newspaper for them to forego their natural inclinations until the road could be completed. Traffic trying to go through the new work was seriously interfering with the progress of the work. He even explained in detail in the newspaper the procedures involved in preparing the soil and in applying the oil treatment. During one weekend, Sunday to Tuesday, 90 cars were counted traveling over the new road. Such heavy traffic through construction made it necessary for Boyer to establish road control hours during the last two weeks of the project construction period. No one was allowed through the job from 7 to 11:30 a.m. or from 1 to 4:30 p.m.

During the last week of construction by actual count 198 vehicles passed over the Sherwin Hill highway section. Of these 198 vehicles, 144 were passenger cars carrying a total of 400 persons.

The 1915 State Legislature, seeing the progress of the State Highway System, and realizing that additional finances would be required, voted to raise an additional \$15,000,000 in bonds. This matter had to be submitted to a vote of the people in the general election of 1916. To continue the highway construction program it was urgent that these bonds be voted and much time was devoted to gaining sympathy for them.

Highway Commissioner C. F. Stern wrote a letter to Mr. Silas H. Reynolds, Chairman of the Inyo County Board of Supervisors in June 1916 which contained the following: "You people had always told us that if we did connect Bridgeport and Independence with a usable highway as a part of our system that your counties would be satisfied and not ask to be tied to the outside world. As a matter of fact, however, we are planning to do much better than that for you... and one of the things that will be done with the coming \$15,000,000 will be to connect your county seats down through the Owens River Valley to Saugus with an improved highway."

Nothing could have made the Inyo Road Boosters any happier and so it was no surprise that the bonds carried Inyo County 1413 to 144, nearly 10:1, whereas the bonds carried the State as a whole only 4:1. Mono County voted for the bond issue 169 to 37. In contrast to the 1910 bond election, this time every county in the State voted by a substantial majority for the bonds. These bonds carrying 4-1/2% interest found a much more favorable market than did the 1910 issue thus indicating a financial stability in the highway program and also vindicating California's action in the earlier bond issue when the people themselves, through their county governments, had to purchase their own bonds.

Meanwhile construction from Sherwin Hill northerly down to Rock Creek had progressed so that by the last week of August 1916 an oiled traveled way was available for the authorized 10.6 miles from Inyo County line to Whisky Canyon. With this completion it was announced that it was now but a pleasant jaunt of 2-1/2 hours from Bishop to Mammoth, a distance of about 50 miles.

Having worked so long and diligently for highway progress in this area it was only natural that the people of Inyo-Mono should desire to celebrate their first highway project completion with a colossal whing ding, and that is just what they set out to do. The August 24, 1916 issue of the Inyo Register in large capital letters and in the framed center of the front page emblazened the following headline: "CELEBRATION OF SHERWIN HILL CONQUEST TO OCCUR ONE WEEK FROM MONDAY IN ROCK CREEK CANYON."

From this article the excerpts which follow were gleaned to show the spirit of the occasion:

"To Every Auto Owner

"Completion of the first section of the State highway to be built east of the Sierras in this State will be recognized by a fish and game dinner and an interesting afternoon of

miscellaneous program is planned.....that everyone attending who can get there. Each auto owner is requested to come, and bring as many friends as he can carry in his car. Each party is requested to bring a basket lunch except meats and coffee which will be provided by the local organizations. Dinner will begin at 2 p.m. The committee would, if possible, reach every car owner with a direct invitation; there are, however, more than 300 licensed cars in the valley; no lists of them can be had."

The actual ceremony which occurred on September 4, 1916 was described by an energetic newsman in terms more poetic than newsy:

"EL CAMINO SIERRA'S FIRST UNIT WAS AUSPICIOUSLY DEDICATED"

"A thousand people shared the pleasures of an outing on Rock Creek under a cloudless sky....celebration of first achievement in greatest undertaking for future development of all eastern California.....work to continue.

"On the meadows where Rock Creek turns after leaving its Sierra gorge to meander down the canyon almost if not quite a thousand people gathered Monday to celebrate the conquest of Sherwin Hill by State highway makers. For 35 years since J. L. C. Sherwin created his toll road over that rock strewn slope and into the canyon beyond, humans and horses have expiated their sins on its punishing climb and descent. It was one of the three most trying spots for travelers along the whole Sierra length and now that travelers can roll from foot to summit and down again with never a bump and in a fraction of the old time, there was full reason for rejoicing.....

"The program began with the ceremonious opening and dedication of the highway in a deep, rocky cut just before reaching the summit from this direction. Across the cut a barrier of vines and flowers had been put up. On its upper side a band of mounted Indians in paint and feathers typifying the old order rode up to the barrier as the official car, Will L. Smith's Studebaker 6, was driven to the opposite side by Miss Dorothy Doyle. Miss Doyle, daughter of Dr. Doyle, President of the Inyo Good Road Club, took a machete from the auto and walked to the barrier as the brown chief of the Piutes raised his hand in the command to halt. After a brief parley the cord was severed and the procession permitted to pass.....The Pathe moving picture people were reeling in many feet of dedication views and Inyo scenery....Dr. McQueen, chief chef, says that 575 steaks and 200 pounds of trout were served, and the supply was somewhat short of ample sufficiency....fireworks, stirring music by the Bishop Military Band....Dr. Doyle reviewed the progress toward better roads in eastern California. Speakers included State Highway Commissioner Darlington on roads, and Senator Lyman M. King on politics.



*Barbecue at Rock Creek Sept. 4, 1916
Celebration of Completion-Sherwin Hill Project*



*Transferring of Packet at opening of Tioga Pass Road
About 1916*

Such an auspicious dedication and celebration was only the beginning of El Camino Sierra. A full six years had elapsed since Governor Gillette's historic proclamation of 1910 and now the first link in the Eastern Sierra Highway was forged. With other highway work already underway, with survey parties laying out future projects, with the passage of the second bond act and with the assurances of future highway projects to the south to connect Inyo-Mono with the rest of the world, the future of El Camino Sierra seemed secure and only awaited the passage of time. The labors of the Inyo Good Road Club and of its indefatigable secretary W. Gillette Scott in particular were now bearing fruit.

This first project covering grading, structures and oiling of the 5.8 miles stretch of Sherwin Hill was finally reckoned to cost \$44,928. Of this total \$38,621 were for teams, equipment and labor, \$3,317 for materials and \$2,990 for engineering. The companion project from Sherwin Summit down to Rock Creek was eventually totaled up to cost the State \$18,982, broken down into \$18,651 for labor, supplies, teams and equipment, \$13 for materials and \$318 for engineering. This bookkeeping may be open to question as it appears that practically all costs were lumped under one item but all things considered, this elementary cost accounting probably had little or no effect on the actual getting the roads built which after all was the primary purpose.

DAY LABOR WORK

Even while the shouting and the celebration was underway commemorating the completion of the Sherwin Hill project, work was well underway toward leveling off of another of the major bumps between Bishop and Bridgeport. This was the project aimed at removing the obstruction to travel caused by Deadman Summit.

Deadman Summit was indeed a hazard and a hindrance to travel. Its summit reached an elevation of just over 8000' and the extremely underpowered cars of 1916 experienced no end of difficulty in negotiating this grade. Most car owners in attempting this summit experienced considerable familiarity with their shovels in shoveling out the loose sand from under their wheels and replacing the sand with pine needles for traction. Sage brush was even more valued in sandy areas for this purpose but unfortunately very little sage grew near Deadman.

An early pioneer party in traversing this area came upon the dead body of a man from an even earlier scouting party and because of thus finding the body named the summit and nearby creek "Deadman."

This, likewise, was a day labor project both superintended and engineered by C. C. Boyer. Similar tents and camp facilities were used.

The Mono Lake Basin has long been the home of a considerable number of the Piute Indian Tribe. On the easterly side of Mono Lake are some hot water springs and a considerable area in the vicinity is kept bare of snow throughout the winter, warmed no doubt by heated volcanic rocks, which probably lie below and may be responsible for the heating of the water in these springs. The proximity of the Mono Craters is suggestive of the probable reason for the volcanic heat beneath this area. It was customary for the greater proportion of the Indians who lived in the basin to spend the winter in the vicinity of the hot springs.

Because these Indians were native to this region and were familiar with the handling of horses and mules, the labor force on this work was made up of more Indians than had been employed before on such work. They were supplemented by miners who had worked the mines in the vicinity.

This project covered a distance of 5.8 miles and was officially described as from Deadman Creek to Devils Punch Bowl and was completed at a cost of \$29,002. (Mno-23-F) This job was completed before the winter storms set in. No celebration was had upon the finishing of this project as the public was now beginning to take the highway construction projects in stride.

Authorization for the first highway project in Inyo County was given on September 9, 1916 for construction of the road from Division Creek to Fish Springs School on Iny-23-B, between Independence and Big Pine. No work was started in 1916. Engineer Boyer was called back to the San Joaquin Valley area during the winter of 1916-17 for work near Coalinga. In April of 1917 he was back in Owen's Valley again organizing men and materials for this project.

This particular stretch of Owens Valley had long been the most difficult to stabilize in order to provide a dependable traveled way. Lack of cohesion in the soil provided an ever shifting roadbed and about the only thing which could be depended upon was that a car was nearly always certain of being stuck up to its axles at least once in traversing this area.

Early efforts to make a roadbed in this area, starting near Division Creek and extending northerly past Aberdeen, then skirting the Black Rocks, Charley's Butte and evading the Poverty Hills to a point near the old Fish Springs School house, consisted of grading the native material in the same manner as was prescribed for this general route. This grading seemed to have no particular effect upon the material encountered in this gremlin infested locality. Wear and weather made havoc of this particular material leaving it in a condition of holes and hard spots, smooth sailing and sudden drops into dusty soils which characterized all previous efforts to build a stable roadbed through this pixilated territory.

Probably because of this poorly stabilized material the decision was made to utilize portland cement in an attempt to bridge across the shifty subgrade. In addition to a surmise as to why concrete pavement was placed at this location (concrete pavement was never used before nor yet after this project in Inyo-Mono) conjecture also plays a predominant part in the construction of this project. The work was authorized in 1916. Work was started using state day labor forces in 1917 but the project was not completed until the summer of 1920. It took four summer construction seasons to complete this 10.35 miles project.

This work shut down during the hotter of the summer months, largely because of the difficulty of properly handling concrete in very hot weather with limited facilities in the nature of pipe lines, machinery and trained concrete men. Labor would not stay in that vicinity in the hotter weather, but hied themselves to jobs in the mountain areas, where they worked until fall. However, as soon in the spring as freezing conditions did not threaten too much, concrete operations would begin, if no other conditions prevented.



8' Concrete Pavement South of Big Pine



Homestead Maintenance Camp

The above features were responsible for the many hiatuses in the paving operations and were largely responsible for the slow progress.

The design of this pavement provided a 4" thick slab 8' in width. At one quarter mile intervals turnouts of concrete were provided so that passing cars could make this maneuver without leaving the pavement. It was a good idea but did not take into consideration the tempers of the auto motorists. Invariably cars met at locations other than those provided and since the motorists of 1920 were blood cousins to the present day motorist, none would wait at the turnouts or would any back up to the provided area. It thus became common courtesy and practice for each motorist to put his right wheels off in the sand and thus proceed to pass wherever the cars met.

In December of 1918 the Inyo County Board of Supervisors petitioned the State Highway Commission to make this paved trail a little wider so that cars would not be forced into a tricky maneuver every time two opposing cars met. This expressed dissatisfaction on their part seemed to avail them nothing as work proceeded on an 8' wide basis. It was noted that in April of 1919 it was reported editorially in the Inyo Register: "Pouring concrete on the Fish Springs-Aberdeen section is probably underway as it was to have begun several days ago. No hope is held out that the pavement will be widened. Public satisfaction with its narrowness will not increase with its increase in length. Until the Highway Commission adds materially to the paved width, that strip of misplaced sidewalk will continue to be a source of complaint."

This paved trail was opened to general traffic in the spring of 1920 and while only 8' wide, and passing other vehicles became a challenge, gremlins no longer rode on the driver's shoulder and the shovel and chain were not absolute essentials in the tool box when traveling through this foreign land.

The final recorded cost of this 10.35 miles of grading and paving concrete was eventually totaled up to be \$107,075. In addition the sum of \$3,518 was assessed as engineering charges against this project.

Highway Commissioner Darlington, speaking publicly in June of 1917, stated that there cannot be much work done on the State Highway in eastern California this year. To bear this out, in addition to the continuing job of paving the trail from Division Creek to Fish Springs School, the only projects undertaken were the building of six small bridges in Mono County between Rock Creek and Casa Diablo. These structures were all built by day labor under the general engineering supervision of C. C. Boyer. Two bridges were built over Rock Creek while the others spanned Hilton, McGee, Convict and

Hot Creeks. The total cost of these six structures came to \$26,439 while the engineering charges, which must have consisted wholly of Boyer's time, amounted to \$1,241.

It should here be recorded that the summer of 1917 saw the hiring by Boyer of a brash young man in his teens just newly graduated from the halls of learning which constituted Bishop High School. Eddie Carter saw in the Division of Highways a possibility for future service and an immediate need of his talents to say nothing of Eddie's need of the highway's pay check. Eddie hired on as a truck driver for the day labor construction crew, however, some local fame as an operator of the frying pan must have preceded him as Boyer immediately installed him as chief purveyor of food and drink and dubbed young Eddie as Chief Camp Cook.

Eddie bore up under this title and the attendant duties for a spell and history fails to record any cases of scurvy, ptomaine or malnutrition during this spell. But Eddie, while turning out delectable biscuits and edible pies yearned for the great outdoors. Finally this yearning overcame his youthful fears and upon receipt of a paycheck one Saturday he wandered away from the cook shack without a word to anyone. Mr. Boyer's wrath was understandable when no dinner was forthcoming on that memorable evening.

The unauthorized vacation for Eddie came to the same end as all who toil not; he got hungry. He desired to return to work but not as a cook. He had calculated his destiny as a truck driver and it was as such that he approached Mrs. Boyer, knowing full well that Boyer would have none of him. Being short of truck drivers, Mrs. Boyer immediately put Eddie to work. C. C. Boyer was wrathful at finding young Eddie back on the job but he was also practical minded enough to permit the capable truck driver to stay on and to draw down his pay.

Eddie Carter's long years of service with the Division of Highways justified his original choice of employment. After his tempestuous beginning Eddie rose from truck driver to Assistant District Engineer in Bishop before transferring to District V at San Luis Obispo in 1927.

Governor Stephens accompanied by State Highway Commissioner Darlington paid Inyo-Mono a visit in the fall of 1917 apparently on a look-see tour. The Governor was pleased with what he saw and spoke with particular emphasis upon his desire for better roads. Commissioner Darlington assured the populace that the construction of El Camino Sierra from the south to Bridgeport might be slow but it would be sure.

It was the habit of legislatures previous to that of 1917 to pass each year special appropriations for the construction or improvement of roads, chiefly in the mountainous counties where the counties were not able to financially provide the money themselves. The 1917 legislature called a halt to such indiscriminate appropriations and with the damming of the flow of funds to these roads the State Engineer relinquished his control over these mountain roads to the State Highway Commission and these roads thus became State highways. Such funds as were expended upon these roads came from the State Motor Vehicle Fund as these roads were not eligible under the Bond Acts.

Division VI at Fresno thus inherited among other roads Routes 13 and 23 from Sonora Pass in Mono County to Bridgeport, 34.0 miles, Route 40, Tioga Pass to Mono Lake Basin, 13.3 miles, Route 23, Sonora Junction to Little Antelope Valley, 17.0 miles, and Route 23, Little Antelope Valley to Alpine County Line, 9.4 miles. The combined total in Mono County was 73.7 miles.

At the time these roads were put into the State system it was stated of them as follows: "Nearly all of this mileage of mountain roads, totaling 682.7 miles statewide, is unpaved; much of it is too narrow for safety unless the motor car driver has had experience in mountain driving, and altogether these roads present a serious problem and one which enlarges as time goes on. Of the Sonora Pass road an early day writer was so skeptical of its merits that he described it unflatteringly as a road where the grades are so steep that high powered automobiles go over them with great difficulty, if at all. At the summit on this road the elevation is 9624 feet. A portion of this road is used mostly for the passage of cattle and sheep and should be abandoned to the county."

Sonora Pass is still a State highway but still only open during the summer season and is even now traveled only by the most hardened motorist.

While the Sonora Pass highway is still devoid of our modern standards, it has been tremendously improved, since the earliest period. At that time there were several places, on the steepest grades, where rock steps of 12" or more had been back filled with gravels, which readily moved down hill whenever a car attempted to climb over the steps. This condition was somewhat improved by binding the gravels with clays, but the local maintenance men who were employed because they were strategically located and had teams were very slow to use a shovel to the point of exhaustion. At other points seeping springs in side hill locations could choose at random whether to run down the inside gutter, soaking and rutting it or flow over the edge of the embankment, preferable to washing out the backfill from a rotting cribwork retaining structure. Many similar threats to the autoist's peace of mind were first corrected, but many others remained until the meagre maintenance caught up with the situation.

With the addition of these 73.7 miles of roads in Mono County into the State highway system the total mileage of the State highways in Inyo-Mono thus became 293.7 miles.

The highway route from the Inyo-Kern County line southerly to Mojave, a distance of 63 miles, was a part of the State highway system at this time but not for maintenance. Similarly the road from Mojave south to the Los Angeles County line, 17 miles, was a part of the State system but not for maintenance. Thus until some new construction was done on these roads they remained for all intents and purposes county roads and travel over them was truly an experience. At this period these roads in Kern County were under the administration and jurisdiction of Division VI at Fresno for the Mojave north portion, and under Division VII at Los Angeles for the Mojave south portion. Since these roads eventually became a part of Division IX, when later formed, the total mileage east of the Sierras was at that time 373.7 miles.

In addition to eliminating the special apportionments for the mountain roads, the 1917 legislature, apparently now realizing the continuing necessity for highway work, removed the three appointive members of the advisory board and gave them, as the California Highway Commission, statutory recognition and made them a legal entity of their own. This act expressly prescribed their duties and put them in full charge and control of all state road and highway activities in California.

The year 1918 failed to produce any appreciable change in the highway picture in Inyo-Mono. Probably because of the effect of World War I and possibly because of the near exhaustion of bond issue funds, but in any event but little funds were authorized for highway construction east of the Sierras. What work was done was still handled by day labor.

Project No. D-191 was authorized for widening curves and fixing up the roadbed through Rock Creek for a distance of 3.28 miles. Prior to the completion of the Sherwin Hill project this was a satisfactory piece of road but its obvious deficiency became irksome with the completion of higher standard roads on either end of the canyon. Its completed cost was \$38,833 and in addition there was \$3,306 charged for engineering. C. C. Boyer was still both resident engineer and superintendent.

Day labor forces also reconstructed 0.2 mile just north of Casa Diablo. This summer also saw the start of major construction north of the Devils Punch Bowl and continuing on to the Tioga Pass road just south of Leevining, over a distance of 11.7 miles. This project, started in the late summer of 1918 by State forces under the direction of Boyer, was finally completed in the middle of 1919. R. S. (Dick) Badger was the engineer in charge of the work during the 1919 season. The final cost of this project was ~~\$72,337~~ plus an additional \$4,195 for engineering.

1918 also saw the culmination of the serious Round Valley highway location. As was the practice, the county of Inyo was obligated to obtain the necessary right of way for the State highway. However, the State highway engineers were the ones who surveyed and laid out the proposed routes so that the counties had nothing to say about the location of the route. Naturally the State engineers would desire the most direct and most economical route to construct; the counties wanted the route with the least expensive right of way. Such an impasse came about in regard to the Round Valley location. The following resolution was passed by the Board of Supervisors of Inyo County which is interesting as an example of two different agencies trying to accomplish the same end, that of getting a highway built but with different viewpoints as regards the expenditure of funds:

"It appearing to this Board that the securing of right of way through Round Valley, in accordance with the present survey made by the State Highway Commission, would necessitate a prohibitive expenditure of money by this county for such right of way, therefore be it resolved by this Board that Supervisor Wonacott be requested to confer with the proper officials of the State Highway Commission with a view of getting a less expensive route through said Round Valley."

Apparently Supervisor Wonacott did meet with the proper authorities and apparently little, if any, change in the highway route as surveyed was made as the highway through Round Valley is still on good alignment except in the vicinity of the Evan's Ranch. Division Engineer J. B. Woodson spent considerable time in the valley on right of way problems traveling from Fresno about once a month and staying three or four days at a time.

Property owned by one W. D. Roberts lay athwart the path of the finally decided upon Round Valley route and Mr. Roberts was loath to part with his property. It is quite likely that the condemnation action started by the Inyo County Board of Supervisors against Mr. Roberts was the first case in Inyo County of the use of the power of eminent domain for State highway purposes. Mr. Roberts capitulated in a hurry as the deed was signed for the much needed right of way less than a month after the condemnation action was started.

In the early stages of the highway's development the emphasis was laid almost entirely on new construction. The term "getting the roads out of the mud" did not specifically apply to the "Land of Little Rain." The cry most often heard was "fix the road so we won't get stuck in the sand." Thus it was that new construction received the green light and was pursued as fast as funds were made available. None the less

it became evident that unless the policy of building new roads was speeded up, the new roads as built would deteriorate from time and the elements. Some maintenance was imperative on the new roads as they were built.

Because all of the new highway work to date had been done by day labor forces, the nucleus of a maintenance crew existed for it was only necessary to borrow men from the construction jobs to do the maintenance. Maintenance was not, however, done on a continuing or established basis. Funds for maintenance came from the Motor Vehicle Fund and not from the Bond Act revenues. This Motor Vehicle Fund was created by the 1917 legislature and was the sole source of maintenance funds.

The California Highway Commission in its First Biennial Report has several comments upon the statutes and its enforcement which make very interesting reading because it so plainly applies to our present day problems, now magnified numerous times.

"The Commission has no particular comment to make concerning the Motor Vehicle Fund save that as stated under the caption 'Maintenance,' the portion which the commission receives for state highway maintenance is not sufficient to make the necessary repairs and improvements. The needs due to increasing traffic are advancing faster than the fund increases.

"The commission believes that in general the provisions of section 15 concerning the permissible loads which may be carried are reasonable for all parties concerned. The difficulty is in the non-observance of the rules prescribed by the act and the inability and in some cases the negligence of the police authorities in their enforcement.

"The commission believes that until a number of inspectors are appointed by the state to enforce the law, and the number need not be very large, the highways are bound to suffer from the selfishness of the owners of trucks and tractors. Such owners represent an extremely small proportion of the users of the highways and there is no good reason why they should be permitted to overload their vehicles or cut the roads with their tractors.

"A force of a dozen state inspectors whose sole duty is to enforce the provisions of the Motor Vehicle Act would correct these evils quickly. The local authorities can not do it.

"This section which does away with the old ten-mile-per-hour speed on bridges, etc., is a marked improvement. The lack of necessity for such a low speed limit in such cases is

apparent since this commission in the year and a half period since the law became effective has had but two applications for restricted speeds on bridges. The thirty-mile-per-hour speed now generally allowed on bridges seems to be reasonable.

"The provisions of section 32 require the commission to hold hearings to determine whether the licenses of operators or chauffeurs convicted of driving motor vehicles while intoxicated, or convicted for the third time in a calendar year of speeding, shall be revoked or suspended.

"The same jurisdiction is given to the commission in cases of reckless drivers or of persons incompetent or unfit to operate motor vehicles because of a mental or physical infirmity or disability.

"To take care of these matters promptly the commission has decided to have a single commissioner, usually the member residing nearest to the operator involved, hear the case and report thereon to the full board at its next meeting thereafter."

In Inyo-Mono such maintenance of the newly constructed roads as was done was done by the construction day labor crews during the winter months and in the early spring.

John Underwood remains the best remembered of the early foremen in charge of maintenance and his best remembered characteristic was that of chief worrier. It seems that he felt deeply the charges put into his keeping so that the lines of worry continually etched themselves upon his troubled brow.

In the spring the state forces went out and broke their way through the snow and fallen trees until they had the road open. Then they would double back and patch the holes as they found them using ash and cinders. There were no established camps for maintenance crews. The usual force consisted of from two to four men equipped with four horses, tow grader and a camp wagon. They would travel along making repairs and grading as they went. Bishop and Bridgeport seemed to be maintenance headquarters but were probably only so as the permanent homes of those men working on maintenance.

Engineer C. C. Boyer who was in charge of all construction operations in this area maintained no particular office. He headquartered in Bishop but his work had taken him all the way from Division Creek on the south to Leevining on the north. He was both superintendent in charge of getting the work done and resident engineer in charge of getting the work done right. His only field aide was in the form and person of Harry Nelson who was apparently in charge of commissary supplies and general timekeeper. His work at Bishop on meal reports and payrolls was sandwiched in between his

strenuous field work. In general he did much work in making short changes in location, staking construction and resetting construction stakes, and collecting field records of time put in by the labor forces. He had the ability to turn out a tremendous amount of field work.

In those days the Boyers not only maintained the office (in their own home), but with Nelson's help Mrs. Boyer handled all office work, including meal reports, requisitions, certain local Division Purchase Orders, receiving records, payrolls and all other accounts. She also dispatched supplies from Bishop, to the camps and kept forms, which provided for their later accounting through meal reports. She seemed to revel in this work. As shown by the positions which she later held with various firms in Bishop, she was and is a very capable woman. The Highway work, which she performed, was done without compensation.

There was no official highway office in Bishop except the living room of the Boyer residence. Boyer, in addition to his construction duties, also found time to engage in reconnaissance survey up the Rock Creek Gorge as a future possible alternate to the steep Sherwin Grade. One of his early recommendations was to by-pass the City of Bishop which showed remarkable foresight considering the times. His recommendation was not acted upon as it was then felt better to go along with the people in their desire to have the highway go through the business area.

Each fall after the end of the construction season Boyer would be recalled to the vicinity of the District Office at Fresno for assignments in that area during the winter months. The opening of the spring construction season would be heralded by the return to Bishop of the Boyers. The spring of 1919 was different though. Division Engineer Woodson retained Boyer in his Fresno office as first assistant to Mr. Woodson. In his stead, however, Woodson assigned R. S. Badger to the construction work in Inyo-Mono. Dick Badger was an engineer of experience and plunged right in on holdover work from the past year and organized for new work to do.

DICK BADGER

In contrast to the previous two years, 1919 loomed large with work to do and with visions of things to plan for in the future. World War I was a thing of the past and all thoughts could now be concentrated upon constructive ventures.

New work authorized for day labor during the year 1919 included work from Whisky Canyon to McGee Creek in Mono County; from Round Valley to Mono County line in Inyo County and from Independence to Division Creek also in Inyo County.

The project from Whisky Canyon to McGee Creek was the largest in monetary value yet undertaken in this area. The sum of \$100,743 was expended for construction of this 7.61 miles project. It cost an additional \$5,188 for construction engineering.

The grading of the Round Valley project which was over a distance of 5.84 miles cost the State \$47,780 plus \$2,701 for engineering.

From Independence to Division Creek, a portion of which totaled 2.73 miles, was graded for \$16,481 plus \$794 for construction engineering.

The first employment cards available in current records are for this year 1919. The wage scale paid on State highway work seemed to vary somewhat in that often as not two wage scales were available for a single classification. As taken from these early employment cards the wage scale was as follows:

Truck driver	\$4.00 per day
Laborer	\$3.75 & \$4.00 per day
Concrete laborer	\$4.00 & \$4.25 per day
Teamster	\$4.00 & \$4.25 per day
Dumper	\$4.00 & \$4.75 per day
Flunky	\$3.50 & \$4.00 per day
Barnman	\$17.50 per week & Board
Driller	\$4.00 per day
Rollerman	\$4.25 & \$4.50 per day
Blacksmith helper	\$4.00 per day
Powderman	\$4.25 & \$4.50 per day
Carpenter helper	\$4.25 per day
Plow shaker	\$4.00 per day
Blacksmith	\$4.50 & \$4.75 per day
Painter	\$6.00 per day
Carpenter	\$5.00 & \$8.00 per day
Mixerman	\$4.75 & \$5.00 per day
Mechanic	\$4.25 & \$6.00 per day
Steam expert	\$6.00 plus Board

Generally it appeared that board was charged for at the rate of \$1.00 per day. Cooks were paid on a weekly basis varying from \$21.00 to \$22.75 plus board. A waitress was once hired at \$17.50 plus board, per week.

Sub-foremen received the magnificent sum of \$4.75 per day for their efforts. The various foremen received remuneration apparently dependent upon length of service. Weekly foremen salaries all included board plus cash in the amounts of \$28.75, \$30.00 or \$31.50 per week. Foremen carried on the payroll at this period included C. M. Stewart, R. Marshall, H. C. Patterson and Jim Gleason.

Foreman Stewart's separation card shows that he was suspended on September 20, 1919. His card further shows under remarks "Good." Whether this notation referred to the fact that he was a "good" man or whether it was "good" that he was suspended is a fact that will probably never come to light.

C. C. Boyer's salary was listed as \$36.20 per week plus board. After June 20, 1918 he received a raise which put him at the magnificent stipend of \$49.70 per week plus board. (Editor's note: There were no withholding taxes.)

While the highway construction work was still undertaken by day labor forces one notable change in the mode of operation was edging its way into the picture. With the cessation of hostilities in World War I there became a surplus of army trucks. The State of California was not slow in acquiring a supply of these trucks as well as other surplus items which could be put to practical use. Thus it came about that the army truck largely displaced the team and wagon in highway work. The increased use of these trucks naturally helped along the use of other mechanized equipment. Camps no longer had to be within two or three miles of the work as Ford and pickup trucks could now transport the men longer distances.

Mass production of an early type consisted of hauling the lightweight Mono Craters' ash and cinders in large army trailers. Three of these trailers were hooked together and the resulting train was locomotived by a track laying tractor. In order to further increase production these trailers had their capacity greatly increased by the use of high sideboards.

With Dobbin furnishing the motive power it was no surprise to find such picturesque titles of workmen as flunky and barnman on the payroll. But with the retirement of Dobbin to other endeavors and with the increasing use of gasoline powered equipment a new classification appeared on the payroll in the form of mechanic. Instead of hauling

hay and oats it became necessary to supply gasoline and oil. In place of harness it was tires which were needed. Repairs to trucks were not only a necessary procedure but an extremely common one. To make repairs, spare parts were needed and also during inclement weather a place was needed to protect the equipment, the mechanic and the various parts which would be strewn about the vehicle.

From this very real need developed Shop 9 as it is known today. The first mechanic was one known, presumably from physical attributes, as Slim Davis.

As far back as during 1917 the need for real estate in the Bishop area was realized. This need culminated in the purchase, in fee, of a parcel of land 100' in width along the highway facing west and extending easterly for a depth of 150'. This lot was strategically located just south of the south city limits of Bishop and was purchased from George and Mabel Clarke. The purchase date was January 15, 1918 and the price paid for the land included the right to the water on or under the land, a right which was to become almost invaluable in the light of the future history of Owens Valley.

Dick Badger, being of a different personality than his predecessor, desired to have some form of a permanent office or headquarters, rather than carrying his office under "his hat." Furthermore, Dick aspired to bring all of the cost data, records and reports up to date and found that this could not be done in the back seat of a Ford nor in a hotel room. State highway business was becoming big business now and its future continuance could well be prophesied.

As a consequence of the growth of the highway business an office was constructed in the southwest corner of the 100'x150' parcel of real estate as the first highway office. It was constructed of new material throughout and consisted of 1-1/2 or 2 rooms depending upon how one looked at this fledgling office building. One half of the office was for the clerk and the other half for Badger. It was in the seclusion of Badger's private office that he pieced together final reports and costs of all of the previous day labor projects. It was here that he kept the records on going jobs and laid the plans for future. Unlike Boyer, Badger inspected all of the work from time to time but also found himself in the office at regular intervals and times. Badger was also given authority over the survey party work. Division Engineer Woodson at Fresno brought pressure to bear on Dick to purchase a typewriter presumably to correct the readability of Badger's reports. Harry Nelson became a resident engineer in charge of work and was the field man for Badger. Nelson's energy was such as to astound others.



*R.S. Badger
"Dick"*



Badger tried to follow Nelson over rough ground in the field but every time Badger put out extra effort to catch up, Nelson would simply let out another link and stepped that much further and faster.

The first office help, or assistant, was a convivial chap by the name of H. O. Rhineheart. When H. O. became sufficiently indoctrinated with the practices, procedures and policies of the Division of Highways he was given the authority to sign day labor checks, an authority heretofore restricted only to Mr. Badger. Thus Mr. Rhineheart became not only the first office assistant but also the first chief clerk of the Division of Highways east of the Sierras.

For the general storage of trucks from World War I bomb shelters were purchased and installed on the lot. A small gas and oil house was erected to house and dispense these supplies as needed.

A combination warehouse and garage building 28' wide by 64' long was built to take care of the supplies and to provide working space for the mechanics in providing for the needs of the mechanized construction forces. This building was eventually moved and now is the Shop 9 office. In this moving one half of its length mysteriously disappeared or evaporated. Construction data are very vague as to the time these buildings were actually built but there seems to be some credulity in the fact that this garage building was erected in the 1918 season thus making it the oldest building on the lot. The two room building, which is the forerunner and actually is part and parcel of the present District Office, becomes the runner up for age laurels. This two room building is now the District Engineer's office and the file and reception room.

Badger rented a furnished home in Bishop but spent about four days of each week, during the summer season, on the road at construction camps or at stopping places such as Farrington's Ranch, Mono Lake Lodge or the Bridgeport Hotel. The engineering crew, consisting generally of one instrument man and two chainmen, usually camped in tents at the construction camps and took their meals there. Of course each had his own bedroll and canvas cot. On contract work the engineering force generally included an extra man, who worked in the field tent office or helped on surveys. At times all turned in to get up estimates. These men either boarded with the contractor or at some convenient ranch or town.

In general the day labor construction camps were of tents. In the case of the kitchen, and sometimes the dining room, a frame, which was sectionized, was used to support the tent. Such tents were ~~rarely~~ floored. Sleeping tents were

standard or Army surplus. Bunks or cots were used, according to the circumstances and the choice of each man. Generally energy and interest determined the type of accommodations which each individual provided. Cook tents were screened and generally the dining tent also. Women were cooks, in all but one camp, where a German by the name of Gross held sway for some time. The food was good and mighty well cooked. The camp which was set up each year to repair Leevining Grade was located at Warren Creek.

At each camp other than the one at Warren Creek the stable consisted of pole constructed feed racks, with dividing poles to aid the segregation wherever an animal was known to be obstreperous. Horse drawn graders, 4-horse Fresnos, road plows, supplemented with hand drills and powder, provided the means of turning desert and side hill into traversable highway.

The people of the State of California were using and enjoying their new highways but they were fast learning that good roads do not come cheaply. Through the medium of the press and their Chambers of Commerce, Good Road Clubs, etc., the people were kept informed of the progress of the highway program and of the status of funds from the two bond issues. More funds were going to be needed that the people well knew and they were going to be willing to raise this money. From the tone of the times it seems well established that the original program would be finished. That an actual completion of highway construction was to be accomplished seemed to be in the thinking of the people. The unprecedented increase in volume of vehicles and size and weight of trucks were not only unforeseen by the engineers but, likewise, not considered by the public.

The proposed financing to complete the original program was to be \$20,000,000. An additional \$20,000,000 were to be added to this for the start of a new program. To amplify this thought of completing the original system this proposed bond act was to provide that if all of the proposed \$20,000,000 were not needed to complete the original program, then any balance would be used on the new program. Nothing was said as to what would happen if more than \$20,000,000 were needed to complete the original program.

This bond act specified in it the actual highways that were to be constructed as a part of the new program. East of the Sierras and in the desert regions roads from Big Pine to Oasis over Westgard and Gilbert Summits, Mojave to San Bernardino County line and from Weldon over Walker Pass to Freeman Junction were included in the proposed bond act.

Much the same activity as prefaced previous bond act elections took place during 1919 with the exception that due to the urgency of the matter a special bond election was called and held on July 1, 1919 rather than wait until the regular general election to be held in November of 1920.

This was the bond issue which would provide the funds for the completion of the highway southerly from Bishop to Los Angeles the people of Bishop were told. Jonathan S. Dodge, Chairman of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, was quoted in the Los Angeles Times as demanding: "That it is the dominant duty of the California Highway Commission to order the completion of the highway from Los Angeles on the south to Bridgeport on the north, extending through the Antelope Valley and the Owens River Valley to Mojave."

Supervisor George Naylor, F. M. Hess of the Bishop Chamber of Commerce and W. Gillette Scott of the Inyo Good Road Club attended a conference on highways in San Francisco at which time this conference recognized the need of a \$2,000,000 outlay on the Los Angeles to Tahoe highway from Saugus to Mojave and north, and also agreed that \$300,000 should be spent in building a good road from Big Pine across the White Mountains via Westgard and Gilbert Summits to Oasis.

Meanwhile, with the primary highway program about to be completed in the minds of the public, and of the various Chambers of Commerce, various communities and organizations began to promote their own individual road projects and programs. Typical of these who were after a share of the new bond issue money were promotions by Bakersfield and environs for the Walker Pass route, Hanford and Porterville with their project via vicinity of Mt. Whitney to reach Lone Pine and Fresno with her promotions of the Piute Pass route endeavoring to reach the Bishop area.

The Bakersfield project via Walker Pass was the only one of these mountain road schemes to gain admittance to the bond act.

The election on July 1, 1919 showed conclusively that the people of the State of California were solidly behind her highway program and voted for the bonds by a substantial majority. In Inyo County only about 20% of the registered vote was cast at this special election but the vote went 562 for and 38 against which provided a solid proportion of nearly 15 to 1 for the bonds.

As a result of this election the State highway mileage in eastern California was increased again by the following amounts:

Route 57	Weldon to Route 23 at Freeman Junction	32 miles
Route 58	Mojave to the San Bernardino County line	31 "
Route 63	Big Pine to Oasis	39 "

Total 102 miles

Added to the previous mileage in the Inyo-Mono-Eastern Kern territory of 293.7 miles the new total of State highways became 395.7 miles.

As the highway program advanced its way through Inyo and Mono counties a definite increase in tourist traffic became noticeable. News of the breath taking beauty of the Inyo-Mono region was being carried home by the first tourists who in turn excited the interests of others in this region of unparalleled enchantment. The local automobile club unashamedly predicted that traffic would increase three fold (what an underestimate!). Highway construction and repair were not, however, keeping up with the traffic and the tourist often failed to enjoy to the fullest the bounty of nature with which this area is so richly endowed because of the necessity to cope with unsatisfactory road conditions. The automobile editor of the San Francisco Bulletin, Mr. George S. Daniels wrote, after a trip to this area, "Mt. Whitney and Owens Valley country are motorists' paradise. Short sighted policy of Highway Commission defeats its beauty."

FIRST CONTRACTS

As a startling innovation in Eastern California the California Highway Commission reversed its procedure for projects on El Camino Sierra and authorized the construction of 7.5 miles of highway grading to be done between Indian Allotment (north of Independence) to Division Creek for completion under a contract to be awarded after competitive bids... While this procedure was new to the area it was the generally accepted policy for building highways throughout the State as a whole. Its acceptance in Inyo-Mono was not at first whole hearted. Some people looked with suspicion upon any method whereby private individuals or companies were enabled to make a profit on public works. An unknown party writing upon this system stated his case thusly: "The system of calling for bids seems to be ineffective. For all we know the Commission may have complete information regarding possible bidders and may provide each one with information in advance."

Such fears have throughout the years been proven without any basis in fact and the final proof of the success in the system of competitive bids has been in a total lack of scandal or malfeasance in contract dealings. Improvements of methods of work and the increase in the types of equipment can be laid to the credit of the competitive contractor which in turn have caused a decrease in the cost of doing work and an increase in the amount of road work which can be accomplished within a given period.

When the bids were opened on January 19, 1920 for this first competitive bid project a savings of approximately \$2,300 was initially realized on this Indian Allotment to Division Creek project. It was estimated by the District Engineers that this project would cost the State \$24,762.95. The low bid of contractor Chas. D. Soteras for this project was \$22,467.40. This work was for grading only. Subsequently the oiling work was awarded to Mr. Soteras so that the final cost of this project was \$37,658. This first project was assigned contract No. 266.

For reasons not readily apparent Dick Badger did not return to the eastern Sierra slopes in the spring of 1920. However, C. C. Boyer was again assigned to this territory by Division Engineer J. B. Woodson and it was Boyer who was resident engineer on the Soteras contract. Just to keep his hand in things and to avoid having too little to do Boyer was also in charge of the cleanup and final finishing on the Aberdeen to Fish Springs glorified sidewalk traveled way. In addition to the above Boyer also kept an eagle eye upon the completion of the day labor project which had been started the previous year from Whisky Canyon to McGee Creek.

It was early in 1920 that the California Highway Commission resolved the vexing situation of the highway route through the City of Bishop. Boyer was the leading engineer in advocating a complete bypass of the town of Bishop. This bypass theory has become an established fact in late years but at that time such a theory was held too radical to be considered seriously. The choice then appeared to lie between swinging west from Main Street along West Line Street to a point west of the built up area, thence northerly as against continuing northerly over Main Street to the Yaney Corners (now Texaco Corners) before turning westerly.

The California Highway Commission after studying the problem and probably somewhat influenced by the merchants of Bishop adopted the route via Main Street to Yaney's Corners. The official reason given for this route adoption was that it would better facilitate travel to and from the railroad at Laws.

In mid-March Mr. Solteras started actual construction on his contract north of Independence. The start of this contract work signalized the end of another significant milestone in the highway history of this romantic region. Never again was there to be day labor highway construction on the scale and of the type which had initially gotten Inyo-Mono out of the sand ruts. Day labor work was too slow and too costly for the impatient tempers of the now motorized minded public. This death knoll of the picturesque but cumbersome day labor procedures was tolled by Construction Engineer F. L. Barney of San Francisco when he spoke "Each contract let on work on El Camino Sierra will be welcome to Owens Valley people as an indication of earlier results than appear to be possible under the State's day labor plan."

The plain truth of the matter was that the contractors seeing a fertile field of continuing construction ahead of them were developing methods and machinery so fast as to be outstripping the engineers. The State could not handle nor did they have the equipment to compete with the contractors.

In a sense it was too bad to see the old day labor procedures disappear from the country side just as it was to see the horseless carriage displace the horse and buggy but it was just as inevitable that the old order would have to give way to the more efficient, less costly and infinitely faster contract techniques.

On March 25, 1920, Austin B. Fletcher, State Highway Engineer, publically reported that of the \$33,000,000 authorized under the first two State Bond Acts, the sum of \$26,635,590.19 had been spent as of December 31, 1919. This sum of money had been expended in providing 2389 miles of

State highways in that period. His report was further broken down by expenditures made in each of the counties in the State. Inyo County had had \$109,134.00 spent on its State highway system and Mono County had similarly had the sum of \$172,269.93 so expended.

In connection with the bond issues an unexpected development unfolded itself insofar as the counties were concerned. It had not been commonly known or understood that each individual county would have to stand the expense of paying the interest on these bonds on the amount of the bonds which were expended in each county. Insofar as Mono County was concerned this was a staggering blow to their financial and tax structure. Superior Judge Pat R. Parker and Assessor James Borland led the campaign in Mono County to gain relief from this interest payment. Initiative measures were instigated and carried through successfully so that the counties did not have to carry this interest load.

The bond issue of 1919 included the taking into the State highway system the Walker Pass road leading from Bakersfield to Route 23 near Freeman Junction. The first survey on this route was started in the summer of 1920. This survey party was under the jurisdiction of Harry Nelson as Chief of Party. Camp was set up at Isabella for this work.

Meanwhile, as in other years, much Chamber of Commerce music was played concerning the adoption of various additional roads and routes. The people of Fresno were especially ardent boosters for a road over the Sierras via Piute Pass. Joint reconnoitering groups from Fresno and Bishop made some trips over the summit returning full of enthusiasm that such a road could and should be built.

There was also a lot of talk filtering down from Mina and Benton way concerning a proposed road to be built from those areas southerly into Bishop. That the people of Benton and the country along the railroad from Benton Station south were in earnest in their advocacy of the Mt. Montgomery route between Bishop and Tonopah was demonstrated by a subscription of about \$2500 toward its betterment, and maintenance. Messrs. Dehy, Hoskins, Taylor and Neel secured subscriptions of \$4,000 or more for the new Bishop-Tonopah road via Mt. Montgomery.

Ellsworth Taylor of Benton arranged to begin work on the new Mt. Montgomery route to Tonopah. A small force, probably about 10 men, were kept busy on road improvement between Hammil and Benton Station.

All of these maneuvers were preliminary to this route being a State highway and exhibited an earnest endeavor

on the part of the population in eastern Mono County to have a good road outlet into California. An energetic bus operator proposed a convenient and quick communication service between Bishop and Tonopah via Montgomery Pass. He proposed that the approximately 125 mile trip be made in about 6-1/2 hours and that his passengers would be carried in Oldsmobile closed cars. In addition to passengers he proposed to carry a thousand pounds more of express. Local truck farmers were delighted with the prospect of sending Bishop vegetables to Tonopah markets and having them arrive in a fresh and attractive condition. This was the proposal made in March 1921.

During the winter of 1920-21, that old highway standby Harry Nelson was left in charge of things of a highway nature in Inyo-Mono. With the completion of highway projects the ever present problem of maintenance kept rearing its head. Held over right of way problems and other matters continually affecting the highway made it apparent to District Engineer Woodson in Fresno that some one would be required permanently in the Bishop area to look after the highway affairs.

Late in the fall of 1920 it was apparent to all that repairs to the Sherwin Hill grade would be necessary to accommodate the ever increasing traffic over this barrier. Thus in the spring of 1921, Harry Nelson was faced with this task of reconditioning this grade. Harry and his crew spent six weeks of preparatory work. Then later in the summer a day labor maintenance project was instigated which produced a new oiled surface up to the summit from the foot of Sherwin Hill.

Sometime during the past winter C. C. Boyer resigned his position with the California Division of Highways and accepted a similar position with the Nevada State Division of Highways. Boyer will long be remembered as Mr. Highway in Eastern California whenever old timers get together to compare notes. He left a definite stamp upon the area by his indefatigable efforts to locate and construct a solid highway system. Mr. Boyer rose in the ranks of the Nevada State Highway organization to attain the eminent position as District Engineer of the Las Vegas territory prior to his retirement on December 1, 1950.

To replace Boyer, Mr. Woodson reassigned Dick Badger to this area. Besides some maintenance work and a clean up of odds and ends, Badger had three State highway contracts during the summer of 1921 to occupy his time and to keep himself from idleness.

Contract No. 300 was awarded to the Nevada Contracting Company for 19.1 miles of grading work. Previous to this project the road from Leevining to Bridgeport digressed easterly around Mono Lake ~~to reach~~ Dogtown south of Bridgeport,

thus avoiding the formidable Conway Summit. Contract No. 300 struck boldly out from Leevining and went up and over Conway Grade in a venturesome project for the time but also indicative of the change in thinking and engineering. This change in thinking was largely made possible by the advances made in highway contracting. This project was by far the largest yet undertaken in Mono County or for that part Inyo County also, and its final cost of \$234,742 was considerably greater than all of the money spent for highway construction in Mono County since the beginning of the State system.

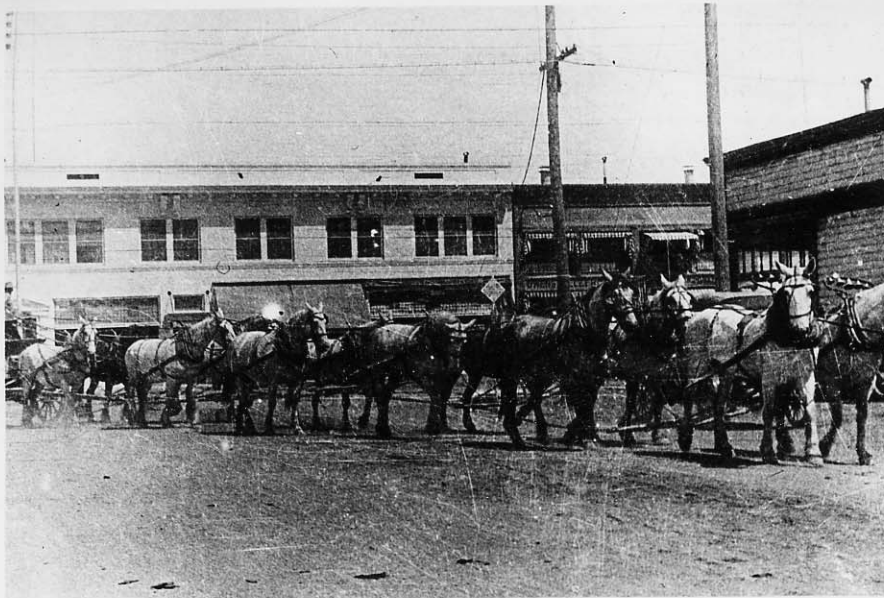
On July 6, 1921 two State highway contracts were awarded in Inyo County. Contract No. 309 included 11.66 miles of grading from a short ways north of Big Pine to Bishop. This project was also awarded to the Nevada Contracting Co. who was the low bidder. The final cost of this project was \$126,794.

Contract No. 310 was awarded to A. J. Grier for grading and placing a 15' bituminous macadam pavement from Bishop via Yaney's Corner to the Round Valley Road, a distance of 8.37 miles. The final cost of this project which was \$277,332 placed it at the head of the list as the most expensive project yet undertaken in this region.

While not in the Inyo-Mono region and yet an area eventually to be incorporated into the territorial boundaries of the yet to be formed highway district was the area in the vicinity of Mojave. Mojave was the south goal of the Inyo-Mono region. It was long realized that if an all weather surfaced road could be pushed southward to Mojave that the isolation of the Inyo-Mono area would be forever removed. The road from Mojave southerly was, in 1921, under the jurisdiction of Division VII under Division Engineer S. V. Cortelyou at Los Angeles.

As a part of that Division's construction program a contract was let in 1921 for the grading and paving from the Los Angeles-Kern County line northerly through Rosamond to Mojave, a total distance of 16.73 miles. Under this contract (No. 280) a 15 ft. wide concrete pavement was provided for public traffic. Lynn S. Atkinson was the successful contractor and the project cost the staggering sum of \$459,375.

As indicative of the times, early efforts in marking the highway routes were reported thusly: "G. H. Dusenberry and L. A. Hazard started out Tuesday morning with a trailer and tonneau loaded with road signing material to be placed along the route between Lone Pine and Mojave. Each mile of that stretch will be marked with either Hazard's copyrighted red fish or board showing the distance to Dusey's where there is 'Everything for Men but Wives and Whisky.' U. G. Smith is signing the road to Bridgeport."



*Early
Power
in Bishop*



*Steam Tractor
in Bishop
12 Horse Power*



*On Mono Mills
Road
State Rte. 40
Mono Lake
in background*

That the county road system should be organized under a single head was early recognized in this area. This matter was brought to the forefront by the local newspaper when it reported in its columns as follows: "That the present system of road construction in this county should be supplanted by a competent road engineer was the unanimous expression of the Independence-Manzanar Farm Center, in session at Independence Friday night.....inasmuch as the Register pioneered this idea in Inyo we are gratified that it is being taken up by the farm centers. A sufficient showing has heretofore been made to the supervisors to justify their action....."

Unfortunately it was nearly 26 years before this particular matter was brought to a successful culmination by the Collier-Burns Highway Act of 1947.

Dick Badger's office force by now had not increased itself; it still was confined to one clerk, said clerk being Mr. H. O. Rhineheart. Because of the multitude of detail connected with Mr. Badger's highway duties, it was imperative that he turn over as much of the detail as his clerk could assimilate. This worked out very satisfactorily until Mr. Badger authorized Rhineheart to sign checks for day labor, supplies, etc., from the revolving fund. This apparently was too much for the young Rhineheart. Armed with his new authority he found it easy to purchase a fancy wardrobe and other items of a personal nature on credit with the Bishop merchants and then proceeded to draw out the entire revolving fund in a check drawn to himself, a procedure which the bank was instructed not to allow. Needless to say Owens Valley saw no more of H. O. Rhineheart, he having quietly and swiftly departed for healthier climates. The newspaper described the highway's predicament rather tersely: "The local highway office has been kept busy straightening up its routes left in bad condition by Rhineheart, the young man who is being looked for by officers of the law. Mr. Crosby, recently arrived here is the clerk in charge." The only partial recompense of this sordid affair was the cashing by the State of an expense account due the lately departed Rhineheart.

Somewhere previously Dick Badger had worked for, over or under a self made clerk by the name of W. A. Crosby. Their association together was with some joint irrigation district. They must have hit it off together admirably because Dick, hearing of Crosby's idleness, offered him the clerk's job in Bishop. Crosby, affectionately and familiarly known as Bob, never having been in this country came over without any particular ideas of staying here but more to see the country than for any other apparent reason. Once having gone to work, however, the country got under his skin and he settled down in an effort to make of himself a native. Marrying a local girl probably had as much as anything to do with his becoming eligible to vote in Inyo County.

Impatience with the progress of the State highway system prompted the Inyo County Board of Supervisors to pass the following resolution at their regular meeting in Independence on December 5, 1921:

"Whereas, it has been called to the attention of the Board that a large block of the State highway bonds have been sold, and that the proceeds from the sale of the same are now available for considerable highway construction; and

"Whereas, the citizens and officials of the County of Inyo have been more than patient in the anticipation of the construction of the State highway into and through said county; and


"Whereas, the Board of Supervisors has consistently upheld the work and attitude of the State Highway Commission, and the officers thereof in their endeavor to do the best possible work under the conditions heretofore existing; and

"Whereas, this Board of Supervisors now believe that the County of Inyo is justly entitled to more consideration in the immediate construction of a greater portion, if not all, of the State highway provided for and contemplated into and through this county, and

"Whereas, there are at the present time many idle men in serious need of employment and available for road construction,

"Now, therefore, be it resolved, that this Board of Supervisors would appreciate some immediate information relative to when and where a considerable portion, if not all, of the State highway contemplated into and through the County of Inyo can and will be undertaken, that the matter may be given more intensive consideration at the next regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors to be held on Monday the 2nd day of January 1922, and

"Be it further resolved that this resolution be forwarded to C. C. Carleton, Acting Secretary of the Highway Commission, and also that copies thereof be forwarded to Commissioners N. B. Darlington, Chas. A. Whitmore and George C. Mansfield, and to Austin B. Fletcher, Highway Engineer."



SECESSION FROM FRESNO

Follow-ups on the resolution adopted by the Board of Supervisors in regard to why more money was not being spent on the State Highways east of the Sierras brought forth into the light just about what the Supervisors expected when they adopted the resolution.

The newspapers came up with information which probably shocked those who figured that the bond issues were going to provide a completed highway system. In this respect the following is quoted from the January 26, 1922 issue of the Inyo Register: "STATE ROAD FUND FOR THIS SLOPE NEARLY USED UP. Fully a third of El Camino Sierra likely to be untouched is present outlook. It will be something of an unpleasant surprise to many to learn that the contracts already let for construction along El Camino Sierra will practically exhaust the money allotment to roads on this side of the Sierras.....there was a vague impression once, that eastern California would get out of the road bond issue, a reconstructed highway all along the eastern base of the Sierras as far north as Bridgeport at least and with a good deal of it concrete surfaced."

The big push on the part of the citizens of Inyo-Mono was for a paved road southerly from Independence to connect with the new highways leading to the large centers of population in Southern California. The roads northerly from Los Angeles stopped for all practical purposes at Mojave. The ever increasing efficiency of the motor vehicle was beginning to make restless the population of Owens Valley and the Mono mountains. Not only was it their desire to get out and view the rest of the world but the beginning of a tourist trade was in the making. People once able to view the marvels of this inspiring country were telling their friends and increasing numbers of the more hardy motorists were finding their way into this wonderland.

The town of Mojave held a big road boost and celebration day on May 21, 1922. Considerable sport with food and entertainment was the order of the day with celebrated bigwigs of Los Angeles and Kern Counties being present as honored guests. Inyo County took advantage of this celebration to attend in force to press their interest in a highway to the north. In this consideration Inyo County was joined by the citizens of the town of Inyokern who were lobbying for construction from Mojave to Red Rock Canyon. The people of Inyokern had banded themselves together and by the force of their community spirit to say nothing of their joint funds and sore hands had graded a road from their town southerly to the head of Red Rock Canyon. In fact the portion through that scenic jumble of multi-hued rocks was really only opened to

motor traffic a week before the Mojave Celebration thus affording the weary caravan a respite from the perils of desert sand and sagebrush through which most of the road traversed.

It should be brought forth to mind that although the road from Mojave to Independence was declared to be a State highway, and as such was designated as State Route 23, it was still not a State highway until the State Highway Commission actually spent construction funds upon it. No State maintenance funds were spent or work done on the existing road, if in fact a road existed. Thus for all practical purposes unless a highway was actually built in those days by State funds any road which might have existed was still nobody's child. Thus it was that Inyokern could build a road and it was theirs, not the State's. Anyone could build a road where none existed before, or even improve an existing old road, and even if it was on the general route of the State highway it would still belong to the one who built it.

State maintenance funds would not be expended on a road unless that road had been first constructed as a State highway. Including a road in the State highway system in the early days did not imply State maintenance until the road was built by the State. This concept gradually changed as the years went on because in the later years whenever a road was added to the State system such a road usually actually existed. In addition, when roads were added to the State system it was usually specifically specified that they were being taken over for maintenance. There are still unbuilt portions of the State highway system and presumably if some other agency would like to construct roads over these phantom routes, the State would then take them over for maintenance. Such unbuilt routes as are still with us are generally confined to mountainous areas where any considerable generation of traffic is exceedingly unlikely.

The various Chambers of Commerce in this region continued unceasingly to play for the completion, or at least a major start on the Mojave to Independence highway as the most important highway improvement. In trying to influence those who had influence the Inyo-Mono Chamber groups found it expedient to detour their campaign to aid those whose road interests lay slightly elsewhere. In this regard it was necessary to side with the Fresno groups in their efforts to promote the Piute Pass road from Bishop to Fresno.

After a trip over Piute Pass the President of the Fresno Chamber of Commerce publicly stated that "Tioga Pass will not compare with the Piute Pass route for scenic beauty

and grandeur." There are plenty of people who will agree with this statement. The road building problems over Piute Pass are of a magnitude not yet attempted. During these years each new guess at the cost of the Piute Pass highway raised the total. In 1922 the latest guess at the cost set it at one million dollars!

While the Bishop Chamber of Commerce had its highway campaign tied into the Fresno Chamber of Commerce and the Piute Pass plans, Lone Pine Chamber of Commerce also had its divergent sidelight in connection with the Porterville Chamber of Commerce and their trans-Sierra highway plans. The energetic Porterville Chamber of Commerce predicted that it would not be at all surprising if it should be first to be opened among the proposed new trans-Sierra routes. Such a road has not as yet been built; neither has Piute Pass.

As far as actual highway construction was concerned, the two Nevada Contracting Company contracts, Conway Summit and Big Pine to Bishop which were started in 1921 were completed during this summer of 1922. A. J. Grier was still engaged in his macadam pavement project from Bishop to Round Valley and so much difficulty did he encounter with this contract that it was not until the summer of 1923 that he finally completed the work. A job which hangs on unusually long is often likely to produce claims, disputes and bad general relations. This project was no exception. Grier was continually going over the local engineers' heads to Sacramento for favors which he never obtained but which only added fuel to a rather unfavorable fire. The project was completed according to plans and specifications and a good riding pavement was obtained in spite of personal differences.

Only one new project was let to contract during 1922 in this area. This project was for grading 11.62 miles to connect up from the 8' Portland Cement concrete pavement project at Fish Springs School northerly through Big Pine to a point northerly thereof to the Nevada Contracting Company job. The final cost of this contract was \$84,598 which contract was awarded to Redmond, Page and Pond of San Francisco.

This project was somewhat delayed in being advertised for bids because of right of way problems through Big Pine. The counties were still acquiring the actual right of way after being told by the State highway engineers where such right of way was to be. It required a transfer of county funds in the amount of \$6,000 to clear this right of way. Then, as now county funds were not overly plentiful and while the counties were all in favor of State highways there was a gathering momentum for the removal of the right of way burden from the counties and to place it upon the State.

For the most part the year 1923 was a repetition of the year 1922. No new State highway contracts were awarded so that the only construction projects in effect were the completion of the A. J. Grier job north of Bishop and the Redmond, Page and Pond contract at Big Pine.

During the period of 1921 to 1923 when Dick Badger was in charge of the highway affairs of this area he also did the hiring and overseeing of the survey party work which was something that Boyer did not concern himself with doing. Most of the old records are gone but there is a set of employment cards which lists, for the most part, the engineering employees of that period. Most of these cards are signed by Dick Badger although quite a few are signed by W. A. Crosby. Most notable of the latter is the one where Mr. Crosby signed up one W. A. Crosby as Assistant Resident Engineer thereby removing himself from the clerical lists to the Engineering list.

Little is known of the actual activities of these early era engineers other than their titles which give some clue as to their work. Resident Engineers listed include W. F. Chapman, J. C. Nurse and W. K. Reed. Assistant Resident Engineers were L. D. Kelsey, A. R. Swallow and Austin Wonacott.. G. B. Upton was Chief of Survey Party. H. W. Kieth was locating engineer. W. T. Rhodes was an instrumentman. Levelmen were J. B. Kirk and G. C. Harden. Jack Fisher, Ross Westbrook and J. A. Whyte were rodmen. Chainmen were plenty and included: Cordenio Correll, F. J. Davis, G. T. Dieterich, H. R. Ellston, Harold Eubanks, McKinley Baker, Paul D. Beck, Charles Forbes, George A. Green, Homer Halleck, Noble Harrah, John W. Hutchison, Frank Kinion, John LeBarge, Charles Martin, Ronald McKeen, Oscar McKeen, Clifton McMillan, Frank Millner, Almon Moxley, Albert Ray, Norman Rehm, Bevet Rowan, Vernon Sherwin, W. C. Smith, J. E. Thompson, Albert Wilson, Dwight Wonacott, and R. C. Wood. Axemen listed then were Lawrence Miller and Ralph Ray.

Not all of the above personnel were on the payroll at one time by any means. A considerable number were employed only for a short duration. The turn over was heavy.

Chamber of Commerce activity was still strong over the Piute Pass and the Mr. Whitney trans-Sierra highways. The activities in promotion of the Piute Pass route even went so far as to have Assemblyman Herbert McDonell of Fresno draft a bill in the State legislature to provide funds for a survey of the Piute Pass route for a road of approximately 32 miles in length.

The proponents of the Mt. Whitney pass road from Lone Pine to Porterville succeeded in attaining a lively hearing before the Inyo County Board of Supervisors. These

supervisors all were in favor of such a road at State expense but finally decided to defer any decisive action on their part over until their next meeting. At the next meeting any positive action was kissed off.

Continued cooperation with the San Joaquin valley towns was openly expressed by Inyo-Mono groups but all of the time the main objective was still the road south through the wide open spaces to connect to the outer world. Being tied into the highway affairs of the San Joaquin valley was not to the liking of the people of the eastern slopes. While the highway office in charge of this area was in Fresno it seemed apparent that the Fresno area was going to get the benefit first of whatever plans were handed out. No criticism of Division Engineer Woodson's administration in Inyo-Mono was made but it was felt that better and bigger things could be done for this area if it had its own highway office. While Dick Badger did a good job of running things in this area it was still not his decision to make.

In order to gain their objective of a paved highway outlet to the south the local pressure groups adjusted their tactics to a different angle than heretofore taken. Rather than pull for direct allotments for the Mojave outlet, ground-work was laid to promote a new highway division with headquarters at Bishop. Originally there were seven highway divisions but with the forming of an eighth division with headquarters at San Bernardino it appeared to the local people that there was no sound reason why a ninth division could not be established at Bishop.

Early in 1923 the Mono County Board of Supervisors let a road contract to James G. Dehy for grading a county road from the Inyo-Mono County line north of Laws northerly through Chalfant Valley, past Benton Station and on to the Nevada State line to connect with the Nevada road over Montgomery Pass. This project was a little over 32 miles in length. The contract price was \$16,000 which price was to be supplemented by an allowance of \$1,000 for finishing and other necessary expenses. It should be observed that the county got its money's worth of road. The financing of this contract probably was somewhat involved and considerably unusual as the account of this project states that the additional costs over and above the contract price (just what these additional costs were is not clear) were to be made up by interested owners along the line. Mr. Dehy apparently made a good contract as he was reported as having made very good progress with his job.

Dick Badger, while not having as much construction activity as usual going on under his jurisdiction, was constantly engaged in the increasing problem of maintenance of the growing list of completed contract projects.

Maintenance was still considered in the main as a stepchild of the highway department. The maintenance force was comparatively small, often as low as a scant half dozen men, but they were constantly busy in repairing the road.

The Bishop office force continued to consist of Dick Badger and his clerk Bob Crosby. Crosby's interest in matters concerning highways was at that date considerably heightened by the fact of his ownership of a 1923 edition of today's "hot rod." His low cut classy automobile was one of the wonders of Bishop - wonders how come Bob managed to stay alive.

Crosby held his position on a so-called emergency or temporary basis as he was without civil service status. It was never quite clear whether Bob ever actually took a civil service examination or not and if he did whether he passed such an examination. At any rate Bob's work was so satisfactory that Division Engineer Woodson took a personal interest in trying to forestall the day of Bob's departure. The civil service commission finally caught up with Bob in 1923 and advised him that his services would no longer be tolerated. During the short period that Bob was "available" on the streets of Bishop he was offered the position as head of the Bishop Office of the Automobile Club of Southern California. Bob still holds that same job today although it is sometimes wondered if Bob feels that this job was also a temporary job.

The Inyo County grand jury at its meeting in June of 1923 turned its attention away from purely county affairs and studies to pass on road building advice to the engineers. Quite probably because of the fact that the only Portland cement concrete pavement built in this area was constructed only 8' wide, whereas the only bituminous macadam built was placed 15' wide, the jury felt it incumbent upon themselves to recommend that future roads be paved with macadam rather than concrete.

Probably the most significant action concerning highways on a state wide basis was the initial development of a pay-as-you-go financing plan by installing a tax on gasoline for highway purposes. As far back as 1919 the California Highway Commission had recommended a tax on gasoline as a means of permanently financing highway obligations. At that time the people at large felt that the highway program was coming to an end and that such maintenance work as would be needed could be financed from the motor vehicle registration fees.

In 1922 the California Highway Commission warned the public by means of its Biennial report that the \$40,000,000 bond issue was being rapidly depleted and that California was

faced with future expenditures of millions of dollars. It further notified the people that the time had come when a new method of financing State highways would be necessary. Sentiment among public thinking people was beginning to crystalize for a gasoline tax which would obviate the bond issues and place the State on a pay-as-you-go basis.

Crystalizing as it was, it had not completely jellied with respect to State highways. With the talk of a new form of revenue the counties were the first to realize that here was a source of revenue as yet untapped and they should get their feet in first to provide funds for the long neglected county or feeder roads. Up to now the "big" money had been primarily spent on the main line or State Highway system. Increased traffic had by now focused attention upon the under-developed side roads.

With legislative action due in the spring of 1923 upon the gas tax the counties saw to it that one half of the sum raised would be applied to the counties for exclusive use on county roads. Consequently the bill as finally submitted to and signed by the governor was for a 2¢ per gallon tax on gasoline of which one cent was to be used for maintenance and reconstruction of State highways and one cent was for the improvement of county roads. The people thinking through their elected legislatures were still, in spite of dire warnings by the California Highway Commission, optimistically believing that the previously enacted bond issues would finance all of the desired new highways. Even so optimistic were they that their "booster clubs" were still clamoring for new and as yet undeveloped routes to be built and financed by the State.

By this gas tax legislation it was now made clear that ~~the~~ highway department was to be a continuing governmental entity even though a considerable portion of the people still clung to the figment that some day the State highway system would be completely constructed. By providing for a continuing and substantial source of funds for maintenance it was obvious that the highway department was to be kept in business.

Because of this permanent feature it is believed that a Division Office was considered for Bishop. The very isolation of this area made administration difficult from a remote control center at Fresno and made it more attractive and practical that a headquarters for the eastern Sierra region be established. Bishop was a natural choice both from a geographical standpoint and as a place for personnel to live.

The Bishop Chamber of Commerce through its Director J. W. Bernard took credit for the eventual establishment of the Bishop highway office, acting through the good graces of

Highway Commissioner Harvey Toy of San Francisco but it must also be admitted that the California Highway Commission through its State Highway Engineer had already made a decision as to the necessity of establishing such a headquarters at Bishop for the proper administration of its affairs.

In any event, on October 11, 1923, State Highway Engineer R. M. Morton, successor to Mr. A. B. Fletcher, announced the formation of Division IX at Bishop to include the highways in Mono County, Inyo County and the eastern or desert portion of Kern County. With the announced statement of this Division quite properly comes the end of the "Old Testament" in the History Story of District IX.



FRANCIS G. SOMNER
DISTRICT ENGINEER

BOOK TWO

FRANK SOMNER

The State highway mileage entrusted to the care of the fledgling highway district totaled 458.7 desert and mountain miles. This mileage was gathered together from the original surveys and did not take into account the reduction of mileage made by construction line changes and entire changes in location. No actual status of highways or running inventory was maintained and so all early day mileages used for reports and publicity must of necessity be understood to be only approximate mileages.

The original Inyo-Mono mileage was from the Kern County line on the south to Bridgeport on the north, a total of 220 miles. With the formation of District IX all of the desert area north and east of Mojave was included with Mono and Inyo Counties. This desert mileage included 63 miles from Mojave north to the Inyo County line.

In 1917 the legislative appropriation roads in the mountain areas of Mono County added Tioga Pass, 13.3 miles, Sonora Pass, 15 miles, and Bridgeport to the Alpine County line, 45.4 miles for a total of 73.7 miles. Of these 73.7 miles 9.4 miles from Little Antelope Valley south of Coleville to the Alpine County line were not in existence as a road of any nature.

As a consequence of the bond act of 1919 another 102 miles of State highways were added to the ever expanding highway system in the eastern Sierra region. This mileage consisted of the Walker Pass highway in Kern County from Weldon to Route 23, 32 miles; the highway east from Mojave to the Kern-San Bernardino County line, 31 miles and the Westgard Pass road from Big Pine to Oasis, 39 miles.

Thus, in summary, the original highway system in Division IX was as follows:

Kern-23	Mojave to Inyo County line	63.0 miles
Inyo-23	Kern County line to Mono County line	136.0 miles
Mono-23	Inyo County line to Alpine County line	129.4 miles
Mono-13	Sonora Pass to Route 23	15.0 miles
Mono-40	Tioga Pass to Route 23	13.3 miles
Kern-57	Weldon to Route 23	32.0 miles
Kern-58	Mojave to San Bernardino County line	31.0 miles
Inyo-63	Big Pine to Oasis	39.0 miles
	Total Mileage	458.7 miles

The total travelable mileage was 458.7 miles less the 9.4 miles from Little Antelope Valley to the Alpine County line and amounted to 449.3 miles. In speaking of this 449.3 travelable mileage one must be a little charitable in so calling it as there was considerable mileage not built as a highway and the difficulties of travel were such as to discourage all but the most hardened motorist.

Highway construction to date had succeeded in building a graded roadbed together with a surfacing of gravel, oil, macadam or concrete from Independence to Bridgeport. Tioga, Sonora, Westgard and Walker Passes were travelable although little more than the original wagon trails originally worried through these mountains.

The desert roads from Independence to Mojave and from Mojave westerly towards Barstow were still little more than two ruts through the sand and sage brush.

These were the roads and such were their travelable conditions as Frank G. Somner strode into Bishop on October 11, 1923 and took the administrative reins in his huge hands. Somner was a large man physically and his energetic action belied his 60 years. His immediate past highway experience was as Division Engineer in Division I with headquarters then at Willits. One of the original 1912 Division Engineers he had capably and vigorously pushed through the Redwood Highway location to end the virtual isolation of Eureka and Humboldt County. Now he was called upon to perform the almost identical problem with respect to Bishop and Inyo and Mono Counties. This time in place of trees, mud and rain, he was to demonstrate his versatility by battling wind, sand and sage.

Frank G. Somner was a character. He had a goodly supply of anecdotes and could tell them effectively. He did not spare himself in such matters. He told of being on a reconnaissance trip with F. W. Haselwood, who later became a District Engineer. They waded a stream, after removing their shoes and socks. On the far bank they started to replace them as they continued to discuss the reconnaissance which they were making. Somner had considerable trouble trying to pull on his shoe. Haselwood noticed his plight and finally said, "Mr. Somner, if you would try putting just one sock on each foot I think your shoe would slip on much better."

When he was, for the first time, being shown over Division IX territory by Badger, and while he still felt that Bishop and Division IX should be given back to the Indians, Badger had been trying to show him how attractive this section really was. The car was stopped at a point from which one could watch the White Mountains, assuming a beautiful purplish

hue, as the sun was beginning to set. Badger said, "Mr. Somner, isn't that beautiful? This country may be somewhat like an oil painting. If you look too closely at some one detail it may look rough and raw, but you can see great beauty in it when you step back and view it in the proper perspective." "Yes," said Somner, "if I could just step back as far as San Francisco it would look fine." Somner afterwards grew to love this east of the Sierras country.

Besides the forming of Division IX, 1923 was a highway year of destiny in many ways. To start the year off the State of California had a new Governor, Friend W. Richardson, and with him came an entirely new California Highway Commission in the persons of Harvy M. Toy, Nelson T. Edwards and Louis Everding. Along with these changes in top side command also came a change in State Highway Engineers. Austin B. Fletcher, State Highway Engineer since the inception of the highway program in 1912, resigned his high post. Governor Richardson then appointed Robert M. Morton to fill the vacant position.

Funds from the 1919 bond issue were rapidly dwindling and demands for new roads, improvements of existing roads, increased costs, higher standards of construction all combined to paint a rather dreary picture for the future of highways in California, particularly with the greatly increased number of motor vehicles jostling each other upon the highways. It was pointed out by the statisticians of that era that motor vehicles had increased tenfold since 1912 and that California even then had more registered vehicles than any other State in the Union.

Talk was already veering away from any thoughts of ever "completing" the highway system. Mr. Morton's office pointed out that it would cost over \$200,000,000 to complete the system and since \$73,000,000 was voted in the three bond issues, it was plain that we were just going behind and that bonds would have to be voted at regular intervals. Forward thinking organizations and individuals were busy pointing out that some form of continuing revenue would be required to keep the highway moving.

In the realization that something would have to be done to provide a stable highway program both from a financing standpoint and from a judicious selection of roads to be either added to or taken out of the State highway system Governor Richardson appointed a committee of nine men to make a first hand detailed study of the highways. This committee of nine was composed of:

J. B. Gill of San Bernardino, formerly County Highway Commissioner
 J. H. Newman, former chairman of the Tulare Board of Supervisors
 E. E. East, Highway Engineer of the Southern California Auto Club
 A. E. Loder, Engineer California State Highway Association
 A. H. Breed, Senator, Alameda County
 Elmer Bromley, Assemblyman, Los Angeles County
 G. G. Radcliffe, Chairman State Board of Control
 Louis Everding, State Highway Commissioner
 R. M. Morton, State Highway Engineer

In pursuit of their assigned duties this committee, together with its secretary W. F. Mixon of Woodland, covered the entire state reviewing the highways and discussing its problems with various Chambers of Commerce, Booster Clubs and interested individual citizens. This committee visited Inyo-Mono in early September of 1924 and was properly wine and dined in true eastern California style.

It should be recalled that the legislature in 1923 imposed a 2¢ per gallon tax on gasoline one half of which was to go for maintenance, betterments and reconstruction of state highway. By this act the continued operation of the State Highway Department was perpetuated. Heretofore maintenance was of a general hit or miss proposition. Now that it was assured of its continued existence, the State Highway Department proceeded to reorganize itself on a more permanent basis and to make such necessary adjustments as were indicated by reason of 12 years of experience.

In addition to the creation of Division IX at Bishop and preceding it by a short period a new Division was carved out of the eastern part of the Los Angeles Division. By this procedure Los Angeles (Division VII) was enabled to give more time to its growing metropolitan problems. The desert counties of San Bernardino, Riverside and Imperial were formed into Division VIII with headquarters at San Bernardino and placed in charge of Mr. E. Q. Sullivan as Division Engineer.

The organization of Division X with headquarters at Sacramento was completed on January 1, 1924 and Mr. J. C. McLeod, who formerly held a similar position in Oregon, was placed in charge as Division Engineer. This Division was comprised of several counties formerly included in Division III which Division was deemed too large for proper administration. This new Division X included Stanislaus, San Joaquin, Solano, a portion of Sacramento County and the southern Mother Lode counties, plus Alpine County. Headquarters of this Division were transferred to Stockton in 1933.

The Headquarters Office itself was reorganized during 1923 in order to provide definite channels into which its work quite readily falls. In its departmental reorganization five specific departments were put into operation: Surveys & Plans,

Construction, Maintenance, Equipment and Bridge. In addition responsible heads were placed in charge of convict labor work, accounting, purchasing and publicity. Such a reorganization had the advantages of permitting individual engineers to devote their entire time to a particular branch of work as well as relieving the State Highway Engineer and his first assistant from a great mass of detail and permitting them to devote more time to field investigations and to promoting the general efficiency of the organization.

The Materials and Research Laboratory expanded its activities in 1923 while yet under the general jurisdiction of the Headquarters Office Construction Department. Mr. C. L. McKesson was spirited away from the then U. S. Bureau of Public Roads and installed as Research Engineer. Under his guidance the Laboratory began to assume a greater part in the affairs of the highway department, especially in the rise of low cost local materials adapted to their best possible uses.

The Bridge Department began January 1, 1924, to gradually assume charge of major bridge construction, adding this responsibility to their former duties of preparing plans. This change has resulted in raising the standard of the work on bridges, through uniform inspection and general improvement in the quality of concrete. The duties of the Bridge Department grew due to the necessity for immediate construction of bridges delayed for years. The policy which required counties to build bridges resulted in bridge work lagging behind the other construction work.

The new California Highway Commission proposed a 4 point program for increasing the efficiency of highway operation by recommending that the State assume:

- 1) Maintenance of travelable State highway routes whether or not construction has been commenced or completed.
- 2) The design, supervision and construction of all bridges on this State highway system.
- 3) The acquiring of all R/W necessary for State highway purposes.
- 4) The construction and maintenance, to such an extent as may be necessary to adequately serve the traveling public, of the highway routes through the smaller cities and towns.

In proposing these new items for State control the California Highway Commission gave the following as reasons for their action: "The Commission believes the activities outlined above to be proper functions of the State Highway Department. They outline steps which must be taken to provide

the safeguards and service which the users of the highways are entitled to expect. This will be especially true if highway users are to assume a larger share of highway costs than they now pay.

"1. Increasing traffic demands that traveled state highway routes be maintained. Counties are frequently unable, financially, to do the work on designated state highways and the general public suffers. It is evident that the time has come when the state should assume the additional cost of maintaining these unconstructed sections until such time as their actual building can be undertaken. On roads of light traffic, improvement under maintenance may make construction unnecessary for many years.

"2. The requirement that counties construct necessary bridges on the state highways has resulted in bridge construction lagging years behind highway building. Hundreds of old structures on the state highway system, in the interests of the public safety, should be replaced at once. It is not reasonable to believe that construction will take place until it is financed by the state. The estimated cost of the most necessary bridges which should be under way at the present time is \$12,000,000.

"The State Highway Engineer has organized a centralized bridge department within the engineering organization and the Commission is in a position to undertake bridge construction on a large scale. The bridge problem must be faced. The best solution is state construction.

"3. The plan under which the counties furnish rights of way seemed justified in the early stages of the project. Time has demonstrated in many instances the absence of ultimate economy in permitting local influence of state highway location. As construction progresses the problem is becoming increasingly difficult.

"The county supervisors would welcome relief from this troublesome burden which, in the past, has been the cause of frequent controversy and much delay.

"4. Uncompleted gaps in the main trunk lines, generally through the smaller cities and towns, are a source of annoyance alike to the traveling public and the Commission. These small towns, almost invariably have not the funds or the facilities for the improvement of the highway within their limits to a standard necessary to care for the extra traffic which the state highway brings to their borders. Regardless of whether or not they are incorporated, the state's duty to the users of the highway seems to demand that it build and maintain the routes through the small cities and towns.

"Legislation which will facilitate cooperative agreements with cities regarding construction and maintenance, as may be just in each particular case, should be enacted. There, also, should be legislation to enable the Commission to turn over to cities sections of the state highway within their corporate limits, where the cities desire to take over the highway, and where they have facilities for properly constructing and maintaining such sections. Present statutes are not adequate in this connection."

Such there was the overall State highway picture where Frank-Somner took over the affairs of the highway department at Bishop as head of Division IX. All previous contract work was completed and no new work had been currently authorized.

The citizens of Inyo-Mono were not timid in informing Mr. Somner that his prime duty lay in getting a road built southerly from Independence to Mojave and Mr. Somner pledged his utmost cooperation toward bringing this road into reality. As bricks cannot be built without straw, neither can highways be built without money and money was very scarce, as scarce as rain in the "Land of Little Rain." Not a single contract was authorized or awarded on El Camino Sierra during the year 1924 nor was any let until the very end of the year 1925.

Actual highway work was thus confined to surveys, acquiring R/W and maintenance of already completed projects. The highway staff organization of this period included besides Somner, Eddie Carter, who served as a sort of assistant to Somner although his rating was that of Instrumentman, M. L. Wilson, Clerk, Musa Patterson, Stenographer at \$4.00 per day, and N. W. Harrah, Chainman. Eddie Carter antedated Division IX and Frank Somner, he having been hired by C. C. Boyer.

The Division Office was still the same 1-1/2 or 2 room building constructed by Dick Badger on the 100'x150' lot south of Bishop. On March 25, 1924 an additional 100' of highway frontage was purchased from Albert B. and Antonie Whieldon. This lot was also 150' deep and was immediately to the north of the original property. This lot also carried its own water right. By this purchase the highway department now had property 200' along the east side of the highway and extending back for a distance of 150'.

The general purpose of this purchase was to provide room for a modern Shop building, the funds for which were included in a \$4,000,000 maintenance program for 1924.

This building was not, however, completed until very near the end of 1926 as its construction was not started until the spring of 1926. On February 4, 1926 more land was acquired

at the Division Office site because of the necessity of providing for storage of equipment for the Shop and to provide room for the growing needs of the maintenance operations.

A plot of land 200' and 160' deep was purchased from C. C. and Matilda Johnson. This area lay immediately to the east of the 200' area of highway frontage and thus expanded the highway's land holdings to 200' along the highway for a depth of 310'. This parcel also contained its own water right.

The new Shop building was erected to a 60' by 60' size and was so constructed as to permit its expansion to 120' in length which expansion was in fact later accomplished. Just prior to the start of construction on this Shop building Highway Equipment Engineer W. D. Peck of Sacramento and J. K. Kinsman inspected conditions in the Bishop area. They were accompanied by M. E. Mihills who remained in Bishop as the first Superintendent of Equipment of Shop 9.

Since actual construction funds were not forthcoming to this area in 1924 and 1925, it was incumbent upon Frank Somner to look elsewhere for funds to continue highway operations in Division IX. The only source thus available was from maintenance funds. The year 1924 saw extensive work being done on Sherwin Hill to put it back into its former good condition. This time, however, maintenance funds were allowed for betterments and taking advantage of this definition curves were widened and additional crushed granite base rock placed. So well was the work done that the local paper saw fit to comment upon the fine condition of the highway.

On subjects other than actual highway operations the matter of a road from Independence to Mojave still carried top priority and boosters for this work never really let this problem gather any cobwebs. Before the Governor's Highway Advisory Committee of Nine ever reached the Owens Valley Frank Somner had made and presented to them a full and complete report on the highway problem north from Mojave.

A delegation of highway proponents from the Bishop Chamber of Commerce, consisting of M. Q. Watterson, J. W. Bernard and W. A. Chalfant appeared before the California Highway Commission at its September 1924 meeting in San Francisco to urge that work be done to provide for a satisfactory road to Mojave. Speaking for the California Highway Commission, Chairman Harvey M. Toy told the Inyoites "The Mojave-Independence road is one of the most important uncompleted links in the State highway system and (subject in some degree to the report of the Advisory Committee of Nine) will be one of the very first to receive the Commission's attention - next year."

Highway Commissioner H. T. Edwards made the news column in Bishop in November of 1924 with his announcement that he had requested State Highway Engineer R. M. Morton to submit a report to the Commission upon the cost of doing maintenance work on the State route between Mojave and Independence.

Such an announcement was a tip on the status of State funds and the possibility of the State taking over the maintenance of State highways before any construction projects were completed upon the routes.

The State bond act funds being nearly exhausted the only funds available were maintenance funds. Since they were available for betterments or reconstruction it was evident that to get any real value from these forms of maintenance it was necessary to have roads to maintain that were in dire need of bettering. What better roads could there be for betterment purposes than State highways upon which no construction projects had been done? This was the reasoning finally adopted and with it went action on the part of the California Highway Commission.

The official announcement of this policy with particular reference to Division IX was made in January 1925 by Chairman Harvey M. Toy: "At its meeting in Sacramento the California Highway Commission passed the necessary resolution taking over the State highway between Mojave, Kern County and Independence, Inyo County, for maintenance 'until such time as funds for construction purposes are available'." He further informed the public that the sum of \$400 per mile for this section had been included in the 1925 maintenance budget. With this money it was anticipated that the road would be straightened, widened and dragged and some surfacing would be done if funds allotted proved to be sufficient.

Given some money to work with even at the low rate of \$400 per mile Frank Somner set about to do the work that ought to have been done with a larger amount of money. The work done under his direction elicited nothing but praise from the many motorists traveling up and down Inyo-Mono. The Long Valley road especially rated raves as being in the best shape it has ever been in. Changes northerly from Casa Diablo were made which benefited the travelers to a great extent.

Snow removal was not a regular maintenance function but it was noted in the press that snow shoveling was done on Tioga Pass to open the road to tourists on July 10, 1925.

July 1925 cloudbursts badly damaged the road through Red Rock Canyon in Kern County. Most of the traffic had to detour via Jawbone although a few cars were recorded as having

picked their way through the dike strewn canyon before the maintenance forces got a semblance of a road through this scenic area.

Because of the increased tempo of maintenance operations, camps and stations were gradually being located along the main line highway at approximately 35 mile intervals. At locations such as Sonora Junction personnel lived in tents and cooked their own food. At places of habitation buildings were rented for storage of equipment or else they were taken to the operator's home at night.

The only State owned maintenance station buildings were at Warren Creek on the Tioga Pass road. These buildings were left over from a construction contract in the area and were used as a summer base of operations. A building was somehow procured in Bishop for maintenance use but it was several years later before any organized State buildings and truck sheds were constructed for permanent maintenance use.

The Westgard Pass road, Route 63, from Big Pine to Oasis, was authorized for maintenance by the State prior to any actual construction funds being expended upon this route, by the California Highway Commission, effective as of September 1, 1925.

Bishop was the largest town in Inyo-Mono and the only incorporated city in the area. As such its main business street, which is also the route of the highway, was not under jurisdiction of the State Highway Department, a general fact which the California Highway Commission deplored in its biennial report. As of January 1, 1926 the California Highway Commission by formal resolution took over the maintenance of Main Street in Bishop which was a point of considerable gratitude, by the city trustees as the burden, both physical and financial, was removed from their shoulders to that of the State.

After maintaining the Main Street of Bishop for an unknown number of years, it took the city fathers less than four months to request that Main Street be paved at State expense. While Frank Somner advised the local citizenry that paving was very unlikely in 1926 he was going ahead with the work of surfacing the street with gravel and he proposed to sprinkle and drag it regularly to keep the street much smoother than it had been kept in the past.

The Governor's Committee of Nine made its report to the legislature in January of 1925. To the somewhat disappointment of those interested in the report if confined itself to generalities mainly rather than to specific details.

This apparently was made necessary because of the huge volume of requests made upon the committee for new roads and improvements to existing roads. These requests were given to the committee almost without exception at every locality it visited. When you consider that this committee visited practically the entire State one can readily see that everyone was good road minded. The problem of financing these requests was staggering.

Ten specific roads were recommended by the committee for adoption as part of the primary system of State roads and each of them was an important link in the State System. Two of these ten roads were involved in the fortunes of Division IX: from Coleville to the Nevada State line, 10 miles, and a westerly extension of Route 58 from Mojave to Bakersfield. The Coleville section finally came into State administration in 1933 while the Route 58 extension became State highway two years earlier (1931).

In spite of the fact that all major promotional activity east of the Sierras was centered on the Mojave-Independence road there was still heavy activity for the cross mountain laterals. The Fresno promotionalists succeeded in getting Division Engineer J. B. Woodson of Fresno and Assistant Highway Engineer W. S. Caruthers of Headquarters Office in Sacramento to make a field investigation of the Piute Pass location. This engineering reconnaissance was made from the Bishop side of the mountain but the local boosters were quick to advise that no efforts were made from Bishop to direct attention to the Piute Pass route as all local urgings were for the improvement of the Mojave road. The final report of this reconnaissance trip was an approval of the route in general. One W. A. Crosby (former clerk under Dick Badger) was reported as presenting a comprehensive report on Messrs. Woodson's and Caruthers' trip over Piute Pass to the Bishop Chamber of Commerce.

Inyo County finally went on record through its Board of Supervisors as officially endorsing the Lone Pine-Porterville lateral remarking as it did so that the Board was conforming to what they believed to be the majority sentiment of the citizens. It should be chronicled that Supervisor Johnson voted against the resolution.

An event of major importance was the enactment by the 1925 legislature of a measure sponsored by the Highway Commission, which clarified many situations of legal ambiguity in previous measures concerning the State highway work. Provisions which simplify the condemnation of land required for rights of way, and creating the Highway Commission's right to acquire additional parallel right of way for the preservation of timber

were included in the new law. Another important feature makes it mandatory upon the part of the state, upon request of the trustees of any city having less than 2500 population, to take over and maintain connecting streets through the municipality..

Probably the most important feature of this act is the one under which the Highway Commission is directed to undertake maintenance on all traversable State highways, whether constructed or unconstructed.

Maintenance activities being the dominant work in Division IX it is probably well to pause and reflect upon their general mode of operation. The first State Highway Maintenance Engineer after the departmentalizing of Headquarters Office was George R. Winslow. Describing the maintenance activities in the Fourth Biennial Report of the California Highway Commission Mr. Winslow wrote:

"Each foreman and subforeman is supplied with a Ford automobile, or other light transportation vehicle, for rapid access to all parts of his territory; also with a two-ton truck and other equipment such as is needed for his particular type of road.

"A recent trend in maintenance equipment has been toward flexibility in use, mobility in transportation and a reduction in size and weight of units. To this end light Fordson tractors with rubber tired wheels have been adopted for hauling light road drags and grading equipment, and road graders have been equipped with roller bearings and rubber tired wheels. Asphalt heating kettles and patching equipment have also been fitted with roller bearings and rubber tires, making it possible to transport these units quickly over the highway from one point to another, and thus do the work of several less mobile units.

"The equipment is furnished by the equipment department on a rental basis, the rent being sufficient to cover repairs and depreciation.

"In remote localities, foremen are also being provided with cottages as rapidly as the finances of the department will permit. These cottages are of the bungalow type of two sleeping rooms capacity, and with them are constructed bunk houses for transient laborers and sheds for the equipment. In addition to these minor maintenance stations there are, in each division, one or more larger maintenance stations under the direct charge of the superintendents of maintenance and from which gangs operate, covering those portions of the work which are too great to be handled by the section foremen with their one or two laborers. There are in all at present statewide fifty-nine maintenance stations."

Unfortunately all this was not entirely descriptive of maintenance activities east of the Sierras. There were no cottages in remote localities and Division IX had about as remote localities as possible and still stay in the State boundaries. Neither were there any other maintenance buildings unless tent houses could be properly described as buildings.

Mr. Winslow further wrote at this same time: "The total length of highways under maintenance, as of June 30, 1924 was 4622 miles. Traffic demands have increased much more rapidly than the State's ability to pave. For this reason the dominant types are graded and graveled roads and probably will be for many years to come."

The 1924 maintenance budget for Division IX contained the following items and amounts for the year:

General maintenance	\$46,401.30
General maintenance	
rental of equipment	10,000.00
Small tools	500.00
Trees	0.00
Major slide removal	0.00
Specific maintenance and	
betterments	26,000.00
Purchase of new equipment	10,000.00
Maintenance stations	2,400.00
Permits	100.00
	<hr/>
Total	\$95,401.00

Within the ensuing two year period Mr. Winslow was replaced by Mr. Thomas H. Dennis as State Maintenance Engineer.

The particular period under discussion in this chapter 1923 to 1926 inclusive seems to be the period of highway development which saw it emerge from the shadows and take its place in the full light of its destiny.

The four point program recommended by the California Highway Commission in 1924 as proper function of the highway department saw its fulfillment within a short three year period.

Legislative and California Highway Commission joint action in 1925 made it possible for the State to assume the maintenance on all travelable State highway routes regardless of whether or not construction had been commenced or completed.

With the departmentalizing of the Headquarters Office of the Division of Highways in 1923 a bridge department

was formed with Harlan D. Miller. This department by gradually taking over the bridge work formerly done by the counties soon abolished the practice of having the counties build the highway's bridges.

Point 3, that of having the State provide its own right of way was made legal by an act of the legislature in 1927, thus removing a particularly rugged thorn from the flesh of the highways and counties.

Legislative action in 1925 made it legal for the State to maintain connecting streets between highway routes in cities of 2500 population or under and at the request of the city itself.

Headquarters Office at Sacramento was handled by various department heads not hertofore mentioned under State Highway Engineer R. M. Morton.

T. E. Stanton	Assistant Highway Engineer
Fred J. Grumm	Surveys and Plans
Charles S. Pope	Construction Engineer
R. H. Stalnaker	Equipment Engineer
L. V. Campbell	Office Engineer
Ben H. Milliken	Convict Road Camps
Lowell R. Smith	Purchasing
Herman B. Weaver	Chief Accountant
Frank B. Durkee	Bulletin Editor

On October 19, 1926 Bridge Engineer Harlan D. Miller passed away and his position was filled by Charles E. Andrew.

It was with considerable gratitude that funds other than maintenance were authorized for work again in Division IX.

This time a contract was let to Harry Wilson on November 30, 1925 for grading of 36.7 miles of pure and unadulterated desert highway from Ricardo in Kern County at the upstream end of Red Rock Canyon to 5 mile canyon in lower Inyo County. The official records show that F. G. Somner was resident engineer on this contract and that the total engineering costs were \$113. Some conclusion can be drawn from these facts. The completed contract cost of the project itself was \$19,730.

Strict chronology of highway affairs is somewhat difficult in this period from 1923 to 1926 as the affairs of the highway were moving so fast and so many changes in personnel policies, financing, legislation and the like were taking place. Records sent to Bishop from Fresno of the early day operations have largely disintegrated and are no longer available. Conjecture as to the whereabouts of such records ranges from loss due to fire in the boiler house (a swell place to keep records)

to having provided food and nests for countless little mice. At any rate our earliest payroll of record is for the month of August 1926.

This payroll contains the names of eight personnell with one of three on the staff since 1924. Francis G. Somner is the only name surviving the two year gap. W. S. Caruthers is listed as the Assistant Division Engineer and is the same Caruthers who was the first Division Engineer of Division III and later on the Headquarters Office staff. Just what his duties were as assistant to Somner remains clouded in fog. A. R. McEwen is listed as a resident engineer; W. S. Dolliver was chief draftsman; Kenneth Pierce was a transitman and Margaret Peel and Sarah Ward were stenos; Comte E. O'Connell was chief clerk. Eddie Carter was still with the Division although his name is missing from this payroll.

All of this force was too much for the original Division Office and so it is safe to assume that the building was enlarged. The present Division Office has been enlarged and added to so much that it is difficult, if not altogether impossible, to tell the exact date when each subsequent alteration or addition was made. The building is mute evidence of the physical fact of each addition.

McEwen did not last out the year 1926 being last carried on the payroll in October. It is understood that he wound up in the State Division of Architecture.

Caruthers last appeared on the District's payroll in December of 1926

GAINING STATURE

In November of 1926 the people of the State of California through the medium of the ballot changed Governors again. This time C. C. Young was elected to succeed Friend W. Richardson. One of Governor Young's first official duties in 1927 was to accept the resignation of the various members of the California Highway Commission and of State Highway Engineer Robert Morton. An entirely new California Highway Commission was appointed together with the appointment as State Highway Engineer of a man relatively unheard of in California but who was well known and well thought of in the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads, Charles H. Purcell. That this appointment was based on pure merit is testified to by the fact that Mr. Purcell held forth as State Highway Engineer until 1943 at which time he was elevated to the high post of Director of Public Works for the State of California.

The year 1927 was also a legislative year and as such several events transpired which finally molded the Division of Highways into its present stature. The Department of Public Works was recreated with the Division of Highways as a division thereof. The California Highway Commission was increased in size from a three man commission to a five man commission in order to give greater geographical representation on the commission.

Financially the legislature finally became aroused to the fact that funds for construction work on the highways had dwindled to an almost indiscernible amount. The bond act revenues had been used up and such funds as were available under the 2¢ gas tax were limited to little more than betterment projects. The gasoline tax was thus looked to to provide some construction funds as the only practical continuing source of finances. The gasoline tax was thus increased 1¢ per gallon with this additional fund limited to construction work. Additional strings upon the expenditure of this 1¢ revenue included the classifying of all highways into primary and secondary highways with expenditures limited to 75% on the primary roads and 25% on the secondary roads. The State was further split into the thirteen southern counties and the forty five northern counties with 50% of this construction fund to be spent in each county group. Primary state highways consisted of the county seat connection highways plus the major interstate routes. All others were in the secondary classification.

Another interesting, although not exactly world shattering procedure which occurred in 1927 was the discarding of the term Division as applied to the ten highway units and substituting therefore the term District. Division Engineers thus became District Engineers.

The year 1927 saw the final chapter in the transition of the right of way program from the counties to the State. Beginning in 1927 the State assumed the full obligation of purchasing its own right of way thus relieving the counties of an onerous and financial burden. Up to 1924 the counties furnished all of the right of way for the State. From 1924 to 1926, during the transition period from county furnishing to state furnishing right of way, no charges for actual right of way appeared on the books. Whenever right of way charges, of one nature or another, arose they were promptly buried under construction charges. The fiscal year from July 1, 1926 to June 30, 1927 shows on the records that the sum of \$53.03 was spent statewide for right of way. For the next fiscal year 1927-28 this statewide figure increased to \$3,415.70 and the State was definitely in the right of way business.

One of the very first formal traffic census was taken on Sunday and Monday January 16 and 17, 1927 in the limits of District IX. These 16 hour counts were all taken on Route 23 and showed the traffic to be as follows:

Station	Sunday Jan. 16, 1927	Monday Jan. 17, 1927
Mojave	388	331
Junction Walker Pass Road	117	94
Inyo-Kern County Line	118	75
South Limits of Lone Pine	549	575
Big Pine	309	311
Bishop-Laws Junction	585	537
Inyo-Mono County line	34	9
Bridgeport	11	11

Similarly the count on Route 58 toward Barstow from Mojave revealed 96 cars on Sunday and 16 cars on Monday. The count on Westgard Pass, Route 63, was 65 cars on Sunday and 59 cars on Monday.

After years of pretty lean pickings as far as bona fide new construction was concerned a turn for the better was indicated starting with 1927. Receipts from the 1¢ increase in the gas tax could be substantially predicted based on the previous four years experiences. Plans were brought up to date and arrangements made to swing another major construction program into being.

The budget for District IX for the biennium 1927-1929 as released by Mr. Somner to the local press contained fifteen projects and totaled \$390,000 which was a remarkably good sum for this area. Even the press thought so as they saw fit to headline the budget news item "Budget Liberal for Our Highway". Broken down into projects the budget looked like this:

Between Mojave and Ricardo, paving dips	\$ 15,000
Cowan's to Olancho, grading 17 miles	50,000
Olancho to Cottonwood Creek	
grading and surfacing 9.4 miles	30,000
Cottonwood Creek to Diaz,	
grading and surfacing 10 miles	40,000
Diaz to Lone Pine, grading and surfacing 6 miles	30,000
Between Lone Pine & Manzanar, grade & surface 8 mi.	60,000
End of present concrete pavement to	
Fish Springs, 2.4 miles	7,000
Realignment, grade and surface 1/4 mi.	
next south Inyo-Mono line	1,000
Realignment Hilton Creek, grade 1.6 mi.	10,000
McGee Creek to Convict Creek surface 3 mi.	12m000
North and south of Tioga junction,	
grade and surface 6 miles	40,000
Dogtown to Point Ranch, realignment,	
grade and surface 3.65 miles	20,000
Between Sonora Junction and Coleville,	
widen and realignment	50,000
For small bridges Route 23	10,000
Freeman to Walker Pass, grading	15,000
	<hr/>
	\$390,000

District IX personnel did not undergo any particular change during 1927 until the fall of the year. The only notable exception was the departure of Comte O'Connell, the District Chief Clerk who severed his connections with District IX in March after turning over the keys to T. M. Hannon as his successor. R. C. Payne was added to the staff as an assistant resident engineer in April but he saw fit to leave the District in August according to the payrolls.

In September L. E. McDougal was added to the staff personnel and was assigned the duties as the first full fledged office engineer and assistant to Mr. Somner.

Toward the tag end of 1927 three young engineers with the rating of chainman were added to the staff in preparation for future work. One of these bore the same name as his illustrious father, C. C. Boyer. Young Boyer only worked about 6 months before resigning after deciding that he was not a surveyor. Albert Clark and Frank Meinke stayed on for a considerable time. A draftsman by the name of Dean Piper was transferred into the District from the Marysville district.

October 3, 1927 marks the entrance date into the District Office of a girl who through the years to come was to carry a lot of weight and responsibility in the affairs of the office and its personnel. That was the day Almeda K. Kinney reported to work as a bookkeeping machine operator. November of 1927 brought Martha Sangster into the District as a clerk.

An organization such as exists in the District Office is never stable because of the turnover and transfer of personnel and the shifting responsibilities of the organization. Toward the latter part of 1927 the staff organization was roughly of the following structure:

F. G. Somner	District Engineer
L. E. McDougal	Assistant District Engineer and Office Engineer
T. M. Hannan	Chief Clerk
W. S. Dolliver	Chief Draftsman

At this time there was no Construction Engineer, nor was there a Maintenance Engineer, Mr. Somner acting himself in these capacities. There were no Maintenance Superintendents nor organized maintenance territories. Maintenance foremen Paul Peak and John Underwood took their orders direct from Mr. Somner and operated traveling crews from Bishop. Usually Peak operated north from Bishop and Underwood south from Bishop but then again they might reverse locations or often as not pool their crews and work together.

Shop 9 was in the charge of Superintendent M. P. Brooks who succeeded to the position formerly held by M. E. Mihills, Junior Equipment Engineer.

The first contract to be let in District IX with the new funds available from the gas tax was awarded on August 29, 1927 to Contractor F. C. Payton of Norwalk for grading 21.3 miles from Coso Junction to Olancho. Walter Mathews was hired from civil service lists to be the resident engineer on this project. He took over charge of this project from Eddie Carter who had started the contractor off on the project. Eddie was about to transfer to District V, hence the necessity for a new resident engineer. Mathews was only the first of several resident engineers hired to carry on this expanded contract construction program. Because of the purely grading nature of this contract no engineering assistants were required on the job. The final cost of this project at \$38,501 for 21.3 miles shows that the grading work could not have been too difficult (\$1800 per mile).

Highway activities and kindred promotional diversions by the citizenry at large and organizations in the Owens Valley were at a low ebb in 1927. This was the climatic year in the fight for control of Owens Valley water between the City of Los Angeles and the mountain people. The City of Los Angeles emerged triumphant in their quest for and the control of water from the eastern Sierra slopes. The people of Owens Valley fought with what little ammunition they had but when finally their local bank closed its doors for good there was little they could do but ~~call off~~ their fight and make the best of what to them was a bad bargain.

The road from Bishop northerly through southeastern Mono County to Benton Station and on to the Nevada State line near Montgomery Pass was taken over as a county road this summer by the Mono County Board of Supervisors in an official action thus culminating a long program carried on by the Benton area population and involving a community wide subscription list to provide funds for its original construction.

MORE CONTRACTS

The year 1928 started on a high note and in fact kept its tempo all year insofar as highway construction activity was concerned. Some smaller projects were done by State forces such as minor bridges and projects more in the betterment category.

A \$15,000 day labor project was instigated on Route 57 over the Walker Pass in Kern County. Paul Peak was in charge of this work and had a force of 12 to 15 men busily engaged in improving portions of this short cut road to Bakersfield.

With the advent of good weather an ambitious road project near the northern end of El Camino Sierra got under way. This project eventually cost the goodly sum of \$59,995 and resulted in a widened and faster traveled roadbed from Sonora Junction northerly through the canyon of the West Walker River. Under this project 18 miles of the old narrow roadbed were widened to as far north as Little Antelope Creek.

On June 6 in Sacramento two contracts were let on Route 23. One contract was awarded to Contractors Monfort and Armstrong for placing an oiled rock surfacing on the graded roadbed from Tinnemaha Dam to Big Pine. This 6.8 mile stretch of new oiled surfacing cost the State the sum of \$36,346. J. N. Bidwell was the resident engineer in charge of this work.

The project from Diaz Lake, south of Lone Pine for a distance of 8.5 miles northerly, through Lone Pine and to the Alabama Gates was contracted for by the Southwest Paving Company. In addition to placing an oiled rock surfacing enough grading was done to make this stretch of road almost a straight line. The sum of \$87,976 was expended for this work. Harold M. Hansen, newly imported into the District was the resident engineer on this job. When the Big Pine job was completed J. N. Bidwell went south to assist Harold on this project.

In July a contract was awarded to Coolidge and Scott for grading 2.1 miles from Dogtown to Point Ranch south of Bridgeport in Mono County. R. J. Clarke was resident engineer on the job and was assisted by Kenneth Peirce. This work cost \$18,566 and did not include any black top surfacing.

Mid-August saw the Southwest Paving Company grab off another major contract in the desert region south of Independence. This time it was a \$95,755 contract for grading and oiled rock surfacing over a 9.3 mile stretch from Olancho to Cottonwood Creek. Victor Pearson, also newly acquired by the district, was the resident engineer. Outside of some assistance from J. N. Bidwell near the end of the work Victor did all of his own assisting.

With the completion of the oiled rock surfacing from Tinnemaha Dam to Big Pine the contractors, Monfort and Armstrong did not have to wait long for their next venture as they were able to bid low on an adjoining oiled rock surfacing project immediately south of their completed project. For \$8512 they constructed 3.0 miles of surfacing from Aberdeen to Tinnemaha.

G. W. Ellis of Glendale obtained the first of many contracts he and his son Ralph were to eventually handle in this area when he undertook to grade and place an oiled rock surfacing on 10.3 miles of highway from Cottonwood Creek to Diaz Lake. This project roughly paralleled the western shoreline of Owens Lake. Inspection on this \$49,068 contract was placed in the hands of Harold Hansen as resident engineer. As assistants he had the Ostrander Brothers, Robert and Glenn, Herbert Darlington and E. J. Parker.

These contracts along with several day labor projects gave perhaps the largest push to the completion of El Camino Sierra yet undertaken. Because of this expanded construction program the personnel of District IX reached a new peak in numbers. About 40 individual persons were accounted for at one time or another on the staff payroll during the year.

A review of the 1928 payrolls reveals names of those who have subsequently reached high places in pursuing their highway careers and others who represent milestones in the District's history.

W. J. Abrams joined District IX in March 1928 as Right of Way Agent and thus gained a measure of fame as being the first of his breed in this District. He retained his position until he resigned in August of 1929.

E. T. Telford transferred into the District from Fresno as Chief of Survey Party. Ed stayed here but a scant four months before he resigned. Colonel Telford is now Design Engineer at Headquarters Office in Sacramento.

W. Earl Compton, then a draftsman, eventually settled for a Maintenance Foreman's life at Mojave.

R. K. Forrest hit District IX coming from Headquarters Office in October 1928 to serve as the District's first Maintenance Engineer. Maintenance operations had reached a stage where the District Engineer could no longer devote sufficient time to this function. Forrest did not hold an engineering rating but as a Maintenance Superintendent he was the first of District IX's Maintenance Engineers. Working out of Bishop, Forrest saw to it that the rapidly expanding mileage of surfaced roads were kept in good condition.

With the departure of T. M. Hannon to the Department of Finance at Sacramento, W. J. Reilly became the next incumbent in the office of Chief Clerk.

The first Shop 9 Superintendent M. E. Mihills took his leave of this high country in this period and was replaced by M. P. Brooks as titular head of the Equipment Department at Bishop.

Of the 439 miles in District IX under maintenance, a breakdown of this mileage revealed that only 65.3 miles consisted of bona fide oil or concrete surface. The entire balance was gravel, sand, pumice or dirt.

The 1928 maintenance budget for the year 1928-29 showed six items of proposed expenditures:

General maintenance	\$175,600
Purchase of small tools	2,000
Building depreciation fund	350
Specific maintenance - repairs	4,700
Oil process - rock treated roads	64,218
Maintenance stations, repair and upkeep	<u>8,284</u>
Total	\$255,152

The editor and publisher of the Inyo Register, W. A. Chalfant, wrote a column of personal chit-chat about the area which he titled "Taboose". Taboose being a native Owens Valley tuber which contains edible nodules or nuts on its root system was much prized by the early Indian inhabitants of the valley. Columnist Chalfant included in his column numerous bits, kernels or nuts about local citizens and events, thus the appropriateness of the title "Taboose". Examples of highway news tidbits concerning highways which are found in the Taboose column refer to Frank Somner's visits to local Chamber of Commerce affairs and banquets; to the fact that Sherwin Grade had been oiled from head to foot on the southern slope and was in fine condition and to chronicle that a dressing of oil on Main Street borders in Bishop put on by Engineer Somner greatly reduced the dust nuisance.

State highway Route 23, from Mojave to Bishop, was this year included in the federal aid primary system and then became eligible for Federal participation in the cost of construction items performed on this road. The local paper in making this announcement also quoted Mr. Somner as immediately requesting the sum of one million dollars for work on this road during the coming year in consequence of its increase in importance by reason of being so included in the Federal Aid system.

Incidental work not particularly on the spectacular side of things done in 1928 included a new bridge over Bishop Creek at the north limits of the city of Bishop. This bridge was built 40' wide and included two 4' walks on the sides for the exclusive use of pedestrians. A bridge over the Los Angeles Aqueduct near Dunsmuir and one over the Alabama Gates Spillway were also completed by State forces.

Highway day labor work involved in oiling, concrete and grading operations in the northern end of the District was slowed down and eventually abandoned altogether because of cold weather conditions in the late fall. All of the available day labor personnel estimated to be some 50 men, were transferred to Paul Peak's day labor grading project on the Walker Pass road.

June 1, 1928 marked the earliest opening on record for the Tioga Pass road. This early opening date was attributed to a favorable season and to the fact that the authorities on both sides of the ridge gave their sincere attention to getting the road open. It was reported that District Engineer Somner had the road from Leevining to the Park gates open for several days in advance of the Park road. An informal celebration of the opening was held at the summit monument with a bountiful trout fry climaxing the event. There was a battery of cameramen present that day to record the event on film. Pictures taken that day showed cars in the open road flanked by snow banks higher than the car tops.

Talked of for more than five years construction work on the Lone Pine to Porterville road across the Sierras was actually launched this year. Beginning work was the cause for a picnic attended by about 100 persons at Carroll Creek the end of the present road and beginning of the old Hockett trail which the new route will follow, in a general way. G. W. Dow and Roy Marsden served coffee while the picnickers had provided their own lunches. A 55 ton electric shovel carrying its own power and taking a bite a yard and a half wide rapidly cut out the grade on the first leg of the survey. A county appropriation of \$4,000 was used in starting the work and the excavating apparatus was supplied by the City of Los Angeles. The latter had heretofore agreed to appropriate a substantial sum for the undertaking and it was expected that the only shutting down that would be necessary would be by the approach of winter in the higher altitudes.

This road was to be eventually a portion of the State highway system and it is interesting to follow the progress of this proposed trans-Sierra highway.

It seems that this place is as good as any to digress shortly from the chronology of events to mention somewhat the place that Frank Somner had won for himself in the hearts of

the people east of the Sierras. It was no secret that Somner did not care for the country when he came here but it is to his everlasting credit that he stayed and became one of this area's strongest boosters. The people of this area believed in Frank and gave him their staunchest backing. This was also true of those who worked under the "Old Man". A rough, gruff appearing man, Mr. Somner was every inch a gentleman and by his actions he gained the respect and love of his associates and subordinates.

Somner was a chain cigarette smoker and ashes on his tie were his trademark. When out of cigarettes while in his office it was not unusual for him to pad about the building reaching in someone's pocket for a cigarette. Preoccupation with his work was characteristic of him and, coupled with his chain smoking, it was reliably reported that it was found necessary to line the State cars furnished him with asbestos so that he could not set them on fire.

The story is told on Mr. Somner, and most such anecdotes seem to dwell around the forgetfulness or preoccupation of the man, that it was his custom when he had to appear at Headquarters Office in Sacramento to take the train. From Laws, northeast of Bishop, to Lone Pine the train is operated over narrow guage rails; from Lone Pine to Mojave and on to Sacramento the train is operated over standard broad guage rails. The narrow guage passenger train was affectionately dubbed by the natives of Owens Valley the "Slim Princess". For ventilation on the Slim Princess Frank Somner used to prop the window open using his shoes. On one trip, while the window was thus propped open, a sudden lurch in the train caused his shoes to be deposited on the exterior or wrong side of the window. It thus became necessary for Mr. Somner to complete his trip to Sacramento and to return barefooted as it didn't occur to him that he could buy another pair. At least that is the way the story was told - its veracity has not been proven.

PEAK ACTIVITY

If 1928 was considered a peak in construction activities, then 1929 was crowned as the new champion. No less than eleven major highway contracts were awarded this year as well as a continued volume of day labor work. While this was a total of three more contracts than were awarded in 1928, most of the latter were awarded late in that year whereas the 1929 contracts were awarded early in the year, thus in effect most of the contracts of these two years were going full blast at once in the summer of 1929.

There were seven major contracts let in the Mojave Desert area which nearly eliminated the sand rut trail and transformed it into the strip of solid road envisioned by the good roads enthusiast of the Inyo-Mono region.

Bartlett and Mathews of Pasadena expended \$94,267 of the State's funds in grading and oiling the highway from Mojave to 7 miles south of Cinco, a net distance of 9.9 miles. Sam Risley was the resident engineer on the job assisted by James Abrams, Glenn Morton, Frank Daniels and Paul Carr.

From 7 miles south of Cinco to Cinco itself the Southwest Paving Company graded and placed oiled rock surfacing over this 7.3 mile stretch for the final sum of \$75,343. Walter Mathews as resident engineer had Glenn Morton as plant inspector and C. Tomaier as the street inspector.

G. W. Ellis of Glendale was paid \$102,724 for completing the grading and oiled rock surfacing over a distance of 10.2 miles from 7 miles north of Ricardo to Freeman Junction. Victor Pearson was in charge for the State and had Robert and Glenn Ostrander, E. W. Sharp and a special young man hired under temporary authorization by the name of Paul E. Evans.

From Freeman Junction 13.9 miles northerly to the Kern-Inyo County line the grading and oiled rock surfacing was done by contract by Bartlett and Mathews of Pasadena and at a final cost of \$141,771. Victor Pearson was also resident on this project as it adjoined the G. W. Ellis project. James Abrams, Laurence Higley, D. J. Bouch and the Ostrander brothers were helpers to Vic.

Fred W. Nighbert picked off two contracts for similar work on adjacent projects. The first one paid him \$115,124, for 9.8 miles of grading and oiled rock surfacing from the Kern-Inyo County line to Little Lake. The second project continued on with the same type work from Little Lake northerly 3.7 miles to Coso Junction for which work he was paid \$84,003. Ben M. Gallagher was resident engineer on both jobs and had the same assistants on each job: Paul Evans and William Kaill.



General View Route 23 in Mono Co.

Looking Across Mono Lake

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Looking Across Mono Lake

Continuing on northerly from Coso Junction to Olancho, 21.3 miles, a really major contract was awarded to the Allied Contractors Inc. in November. For this grading and oiled rock surfacing the contractor was paid \$234,963. Sam Risley was the resident engineer. He had as his helpers on this job and at various times R. J. Clark, James Abrams, the Ostrander brothers and Cliff LaFountaine.

These seven projects all had the same general typical section. A 36' wide graded roadbed was prepared upon which a 20'x3-1/2" layer of crusher run base was placed. A 20'x3" crushed rock or gravel surface treated with liquid asphalt was then placed on top of the base course.

Because of this heavy construction program south of Independence it naturally followed that the motorist would be discommoded and interfered with by reason of detours or having to drive through construction areas and past graders, shovels and oil trucks. The local paper had the following to say about this condition: "Roads between Owens Valley and Mojave and particularly toward the southern end are unusually rough, a fact unfortunate for the beginning of the tourist season. Work is underway on contracts north of Mojave and some detours are necessary. Another year will see the whole strip oiled and when it is in as good condition as the road throughout the valley it will be far more pleasing and time saving than at present."

In the mountains of Mono County three contractors were engaged in work which was to result in improved traveling conditions between Bishop and Bridgeport.

Donald C. Follis held a contract for grading 1.6 miles of roadbed near Hilton Creek which paid him \$17,280.

Montfort and Armstrong were paid \$27,018 for grading 3.0 miles from McGee Creek to Convict Creek and for placing a rock surface course.

Grading only from the Mattly Ranch to Leevining, 21.2 miles, was done under two contracts to C. Miles at a total cost of \$54,516 with Vic Pearson, Sam Risley and Walter Mathews taking turns as resident engineer.

Walter Mathews was the resident engineer on all three of these jobs. As assistants he had at different times Tanjor T. Black, Kenneth Peirce, D. J. Bouch, Sam Risley and Albert Clark.

On the day labor scene it was reported that there was a total of 180,000 gallons of fuel oil used for road mixing

approximately 12 miles of road between south of Tinnemaha and Bishop. A total of 103 miles of dust oil surfacing, utilizing 400,000 gallons of fuel oil, was spread over roads from Sherwin Hill to Mono Lake (50 miles), Big Pine to Zurich (2 miles), Coso to Olancho (21 miles) and Mojave and Kramer on Route 58 (30 miles).

The sharp right angle turn at Yaney Corners north of Bishop, (later known as Texaco Corners) was replaced by a curve with a 1500' radius. This work necessitated taking a bite out of the land just north of the race track.

Day labor work was done on the Westgard Pass route mainly in the area east of the White Mountains and in the Oasis Ranch region. Day labor work also was continuing on the widening of the West Walker River road in the northern Mono County and on the Walker Pass road in eastern Kern County.

The opening of Tioga Pass was scheduled for Saturday, June 15 and another festive occasion was planned by the citizens of Leevining. Bill Parmalee and Bob Currie were in charge of the entertainment which was to be started by a formal picture taking ceremony at Tioga Summit at 11 a.m. The climatic event, a free barbecue, was to be held at Leevining with an estimated 500 persons to take advantage of the free eatables. On the day appointed, rain fell in such copious quantities on the mountain pass that the score or more of hardy motorists who made the ascent to the summit top were forced to retrace their paths again to Leevining. George Delury, President of the Mono County Chamber of Commerce, acted as master of ceremonies at the transplanted formalities. There was more than a plenty of food for all.

The June 13 issue of the Inyo Register had this to say about Sonora Pass: "The Sonora Pass road between Sonora and Bridgeport, via Strawberry Lake, is now open over the summit, or at least the snow has been removed."

The year 1929 also hit the apex insofar as the number of personnel names found on the District Staff payroll, it reaching the high total of 70 names. Of course all were not on the payroll at the same time, the top figure of 46 being reached in the month of August.

W. H. Abrams, the District's first Right of Way Agent, resigned in August for personal reasons. F. A. Strock, a temporary appointee, was selected to replace Abrams.

J. N. Bidwell who was very active in construction work transferred to District III in April. Earl Compton left the drafting room for a job with the District maintenance forces. His brother Glenn, affectionately known as Doc,

joined the staff payroll on February 20, 1929, as a Grade II Draftsman. Of all of the early personnel on the staff payroll these are the only men who in 1952 are still on the payroll for District IX.

R. K. Forrest resigned his position as District Maintenance Engineer in July. He was replaced by Preston L. Fite. Pres came from District X, then at Sacramento and may be classed as the first engineer to hold down the Maintenance Engineer's job as it will be remembered that Forrest's rating was that of Maintenance Superintendent.

The office engineer's chair had trouble recognizing its occupant this summer. L. E. McDougal was transferred in May to San Luis Obispo. To replace him Headquarters Office sent Cliff Temby to Bishop. Cliff could not learn to like the country and after three months trial he arranged for a transfer for himself to District III with E. K. Guion of District III moving over to Bishop. Cliff really wanted to get away from Bishop, testified by the fact that he took a subordinate position under Richard H. Wilson who was the man who actually succeeded Guion as Office Engineer of District III. Cliff Temby eventually rose to be Assistant District Engineer at District X, Stockton.

Dean Piper, who was prominent in early day engineering in Bishop resigned his position in November. R. J. Munro, a Grade IV locating engineer transferred here from District X, stayed only long enough to make up his mind about the country and then left for South America. His stay in District IX was slightly less than two months.

Joe Stanley came to work from his home town of Oroville as an instrumentman in June.

Paul Evans started his highway career in August as did Ben Gallagher. Ben was listed as an instrumentman while Paul was carried on the payroll as an assistant resident engineer.

Two of the District's personnel were dismissed from State service during the year. The reason for one was given as "Insubordination, wanting to fight" - the other merely stated "Services unsatisfactory." There were two layoffs, both marked as reduction in forces. Strangely enough the number of names appearing on the payroll scarcely seems to bear out this reasoning.

The large number of names on the payroll which only emphasizes the turn over in personnel would make one wonder about working conditions in District IX. The plain truth of the matter was, and still is, that working conditions in the

region embraced by District IX are of the highest. The relatively isolated location from the centers of population and the desert and mountain regions make this area akin to Nevada rather than to California. The mental attitude generated by being away from the big towns has prompted the feeling throughout the other Districts of the State that District IX is Siberia. If this mental attitude can be divorced from one's thoughts, there is really no more delightful place imaginable to live. The weather is ideal for those who love the sun the year around. The people of this area are most charming and gracious and as a consequence of depending to a large extent upon tourist economy are adept at making the stranger feel at home. Probably it is for the best that all people do not have the same desires in a place to live else this delightful area would lose much of its prime attributes by reason of too many people.

During the year 1929 work by county forces using cooperative help from the City of Los Angeles continued progress in their attempts to bite a road across the highest Sierras from Lone Pine to Porterville. Starting uphill from Carroll Creek to the Inyo-Tulare County line 14 miles from the starting point this road has hopes of crossing the Sierras at Cottonwood Pass which boasts an elevation of 10,500 feet. The summer of 1929 was expected to have the road built to Horseshoe Meadows some 1-1/2 miles easterly of the Tulare County line.

By July 1929 the work had progressed to a point 3-1/2 miles west of Carroll Creek at which point the funds advanced by the City of Los Angeles were depleted and work was stopped. The Board of Supervisors of Inyo County promptly appropriated \$5,000 for this work which set the wheels to work again with only one day lost time. In October the work had reached a point 4 miles west of Carroll Creek. The work at that time was pushing the road ahead at the rate of about 100 feet per day. Revised estimates now read 18 months additional time to reach Cottonwood Pass.

The Coleville northerly highway to the Nevada State line near Topaz Lake was currently under construction by the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads. Forestry officials announced that the road they were building from the State highway near Hot Creek westerly into the Mammoth Lakes area was about completed.

Continued agitation for the adoption of the Montgomery Pass highway into the State highway system went on all year long.

The City of Bishop passed an ordinance in March legalizing the use of Stop signs on Main Street in Bishop. The signs were erected so that all traffic entering Main Street

must stop. Marshal Collins and the City Council warned all motorists that they meant business and that those who were so fool-hardy as to fail to heed the sign's message would find themselves out of luck as a stiff penalty was provided for in the ordinance.

The year 1929 was a legislative year and numerous bills were introduced affecting the highways. At Governor C. C. Young's suggestion however all such bills were set aside and a legislative committee was appointed to study all changes and additions to the system suggested.

They did, however, pass a law governing the prequalification of prospective bidders on public works. This law was prompted by the fact of too many contractors becoming overly ambitious for the amount of capital and equipment which was available to them. Over reaching of their ability led to too many contractors going broke. The legislation passed was to allow the State to judge, based upon capital, equipment, experience, etc., just on how large a project a contractor would be allowed to bid. This has proven through the years to be a good law.

The crude and imperfect state of maintenance facilities in 1929 stand out in sharp relief when compared to the facilities of 1950 but they were, perhaps, no worse than other 1929 vintage products when compared to those of a score or more years later.

As the roads became improved and as travel increased it was no more than natural that the public would demand a better and uniform procedure for seeing that the roads were constantly kept in this improved condition. When traffic was light and the roads relatively unimproved a light dragging in spring and fall seemed to satisfy all of the conditions expected of the maintenance crew. Under these conditions the crews could live some distance apart and do the maintenance on a roving basis.

When Pres Fite took over as District Maintenance Engineer at Bishop there were no real established year round maintenance stations. Warren Creek, high up on Tioga's slopes was the only recognized maintenance station and with the advent of winter each year the hardy maintenance men beat a hasty retreat to the less invigorating climate at Leevining. At all other points of maintenance activities there were no formal buildings. The men lived in either tents or private homes. The equipment was either parked along the roadside or taken home and parked in the driver's yard.

At Sonora Junction the crews lived, ate, slept and played cards in tents. At Bridgeport the men lived at home.

At Warren Creek the framed structures which set this station apart from the others were an unlined cook house and a small framed house used by Foreman Jack Flynn and his wife. Flynn's house was really but little more than a bedroom. All of the rest of this station's personnel enjoyed the rarified altitude from the privacy of their tents.

A camp was then established on Hot Creek and it, too, was blessed with a 12'x16' unlined cabin which was utilized as a cook house. The entire crew was housed under canvas.

There were no maintenance stations then in existence at Conway Summit, Crestview or at McGee Creek.

Mojave, Homestead, Onyx, Olancho, Big Pine, Lone Pine, Bishop and Deep Springs all had one thing in common in 1929. The maintenance men either lived at home or in tents. Equipment was left out in the weather. Gas and oil were transported about in drums.

Since it was obvious to Pres Fite that maintenance was here to stay it became his prime objective to provide working quarters and conditions to make the lot of the maintenance man less like that of the native Piute and more in keeping with the prime duties and necessities of his work. A considerable number of portable buildings were erected, some actually built on the site while others were purchased and hauled in. Truck sheds and fuel houses were built on a permanent basis, some each year. Portable houses used as temporary expedients are still being so used. Tremendous efforts by Fite led to the complete elimination of tents for human habitation within a period of three or four years. Most all of the maintenance buildings erected in this period were so erected by the State forces themselves.

The men in charge of actually getting the maintenance work done were then, as now, the foremen. In 1929 there were two foremen who were entrusted with more than just routine maintenance: Paul Peak and Dwight Wonacott. Dwight had succeeded to the general foreman's job previously held by John Underwood. Paul and Dwight between them handled all of the large and complex day labor projects and were in some respects the predecessors of the future maintenance superintendents. Dwight in fact a year later became the first maintenance superintendent in the District if we except the fact that R. K. Forrest, while carrying the title, was not actually performing a superintendent's duties.

While in charge of day labor work in the West Walker River Canyon in 1929 Paul Peak had two future foremen working for him in the persons of John Van Dyck as a tractor operator and Dominik Wiget on the grader.

Houston Cline was the foreman at Sonora Junction. Foreman W. Miller at Bridgeport was also overseer of the Poor Farm just south of Bridgeport. Even at that date Miller was using a team of horses to pull a drag and to haul patching material. He was soon supplied with a Ford truck to enable him to get over his territory speedier and oftener.

Jack Flynn was the foreman at Warren Creek. During the winter months this crew headquartered at Farrington's near Leevining.

Hot Creek had three foremen during its short history, A. Bowman, S. Merrill and Frank Butler, all acting as boss before the station was dismantled and moved to Crestview in 1931.

Carl Cleland became foreman at Bishop in 1930 with the elevation of Dwight Wonacott to the position of superintendent. Carl had had plenty of construction experience but was actually working for Shop 9 when he transferred over to maintenance.

Alvin Theobald was the foreman at Lone Pine before his assignment to Onyx on the Walker Pass route. Ed Powers preceded Alvin at Onyx and moved over to Mojave when Theobald arrived.

Ed Monroe was the foreman at Mojave and had George Harbey and Milton Straddas leadingmen.

Up Inyokern way at Homestead Station Foreman John Calloway maintained the highway mainly by dragging the surface.

At Olancho Foreman A. C. George was using a truck pulling a railroad rim drag to take care of the road.

Henry Richards was the foreman operating in the Big Pine and Deep Springs area. He usually worked alone mostly because of his personal nature.

Other names prominent then as well as later on in District IX were Custer Deyo, motorgrader operator and later foreman; Herman Holt, equipment operator in the Bridgeport area; Emil Penrose who built several maintenance facilities and later rose to a superintendent in the Los Angeles area; E. Green and Mike Silva who each were foreman for a time at Leevining; M. Beaty, tractor operator at Onyx, who became foreman at Homestead later; George Lawman who carried the reputation as the best oil mix finisher in the District with a motorgrader for many years and E. Flaxa who eventually became the foreman at Benton Station

STATISTICS

The only particular reason that the year 1930 produced much construction activity was the fact that several contracts started in 1929 were carried over the winter and were completed in 1930.

There were only two contracts awarded for projects in the eastern Sierra region in 1930 but these were two mighty important contracts. One in the extreme northerly end of the District and one in the very southern end had certain similarities to them.

In Mono County a contract was awarded to Kennedy-Bayles Construction Company for grading from Sonora Junction to 4 miles south of Coleville. This contract of 12.94 miles was primarily through the West Walker River Canyon and completed by contract what had been originally built and then widened by day labor forces. For this grading work the contractor received \$176,391. Sam Risley was the resident engineer assisted solely by Paul Evans. The actual work was finally completed on April 11, 1931.

Similarly in eastern Kern County a road early built through an historic canyon was rebuilt to better standards and oil rock surfaced under a contract let in January 1930 to George Herz & Co. This was a 15 mile project all in the Mojave Desert from Cinco to 7 miles north of Ricardo and included the re-grading through that amazing geological formation known as Red Rock Canyon. Walter Mathews was the resident engineer and at various times he had R. J. Clark, the Ostrander brothers, William Kaill, Cliff LaFountaine, Tom Evans, James Abrams and Paul Evans as assistants. It was a rare job in District IX in these days that did not have Paul Evans on it at some time during its life.

This Cinco to 7 miles north of Ricardo project was the completing link in providing a reconstructed and surfaced road from Bishop southward to Mojave. It took Mr. Somner just seven and one half years to bring about this objective and to fulfill the destiny with which he was charged upon his arrival in Bishop to head District IX in the fall of 1923.

Because of the heavy construction work underway, traffic was still inconvenienced but because of the populace at large being able to see what the end result was going to be there was no wholesale dissatisfaction with touring conditions. The Inyo Register of May 15 discussed this situation in its columns: "Contractors are busy on changes in the highway south of Owens Valley and in consequence much of the way is subject to detours or to going not as smooth as the finished work. The beginnings of changes of routing are seen

in Red Rock Canyon where the roadbed will be several feet higher than the floor which has been so often swept by floods. Some distance has been saved by changes at Little Lake where the highway now keeps to the east of the railroad track and avoids a westward swing across a dry lake. In another season with the improved alignment and oiled surface the route should be such to satisfy the most exacting."

Construction had by 1930 shrunken the actual number of miles of highway in District IX. Relocations and line changes had by now reduced the mileage of State highways to 432. Maintenance forces under District Maintenance Engineer Pres Fite expended the sum of \$294,995.96 for the current year on maintenance activities. As of July 1, 1930 Dwight Wonacott at Bishop was directing field forces as the District's first Maintenance Superintendent. There were 12 maintenance foremen and some 85 laborers, truck drivers, grader operators and other miscellaneous personnel on the payroll.

Snow removal operations consisted primarily of opening up the various passes in the spring of the year. The amount spent for each pass was listed for the first time in the spring of 1930:

Route 23 - includes Sherwin, Deadman and Conway Summits	\$2,623.64
Sonora Pass	2,604.56
Tioga Pass	1,091.68
Westgard Pass	94.00
Walker Pass	423.41

The 432 miles of District IX were classified by surface types in the following manner:

Portland Cement Concrete	8.1 miles
Asphalt concrete	0.0 miles
Bituminous macadam	10.3 miles
Oil mixtures	134.5 miles
Rock surfaced	6.4 miles
Earth	272.1 miles
Bridges	<u>0.2 miles</u>

Total 431.6 miles

Of these 431.6 miles of road there exists another category or breakdown which, while it does not affect the quality or quantity of the maintenance, is often separated for other reasons and that is the mileage of State highways that is within the boundaries of national forests and which is called the Forest Highway System. In District IX this mileage totals 156.8 miles and is made up of the following State highways:

Route 13	Sonora Pass	15.0 miles
Route 23	Inyo County line to Whisky Creek	10.00 miles
Route 23	McGee Creek to Mono Lake	46.0 miles
Route 23	Bridgeport to Alpine County line	45.4 miles
Route 40	Tioga Pass	12.5 miles
Route 63	Big Pine to Deep Springs Ranch	27.9 miles
Total		156.8 miles

The maintenance crew was spending considerable time, money and effort in attempting to provide a good two way road over Westgard Pass. For years the narrow canyon had provided the traveler with a problem where the road and the creek vie with each other for the right to pass. This time the maintenance forces were able to get enough width not only for the creek but for a two way road. It thus became possible for the first time for two cars to pass in this canyon but not without the drivers paying strict attention to their driving.

Tioga Pass was freed from its winter blanket of snow on June 21 thus permitting tourist traffic to enter and leave Yosemite Valley by way of the high country. The opening of this pass meant much to the resort owners, motel, service stations and restaurant operators in the Leevining, Mono Lake area and was the reason for the celebrating and merry making which annually accompanied the announcement that Tioga was open again. This year both a barbecue and a trout fry were featured events.

On the political scene much to do was still being made over efforts to get the Bishop to Montgomery Pass road into the State system as well as to include a little orphan piece of Mono County road from Oasis to the Nevada State line into the system as a part of Route 63.

This was also the gubernatorial election year which resulted in the election of James Rolph Jr., Mayor of San Francisco, and the unseating of Governor C. C. Young.

Frank Somner really had his hands full of work to do and records show that he averaged about 300 miles of travel per month in fulfilling his official duties, most of which involved the inspection of work underway and plans for new work. He was present in Los Angeles at State Chamber of Commerce meetings involving highway work and present at local affairs. An article in the local paper tells thus about his speech making qualities: "Highway Division Engineer Somner told the Rotary Club many interesting things about the work in which he is engaged at the club luncheon last Friday. One

of the most striking facts noted was his statement that during the period ending with 1936 expenditures on this District's highways will total from 15 to 18 million dollars. Future work will include a first class highway from Sherwin Hill to Bridgeport and a relocation between Bishop and Big Pine."

Peak staff personnel occurred in June of 1930 at 48 people. There was no sharp dropping off of personnel although by the end of the year there remained but 38 on the staff payroll. During the year few were added to the staff on other than a temporary basis.

F. A. Strock, the Right of Way Agent, transferred himself to District III. His successor was no stranger to this area and in fact was once before vitally interested in the right of way problems of this area. J. B. Woodson, formerly District Engineer at Fresno, loved this area so well that when the opportunity came for him to return here he wasted no time in accepting it. Because of his early and intimate knowledge of this area and its inhabitants he proved himself to be an able assistant to Frank Somner.

Because of the tapering off of work in the eastern Sierra region many capable engineers were being transferred to other districts. James Abrams transferred to District V at San Luis Obispo at the end of the year. Merle A. Ewing transferred to District X, then at Sacramento. Victor E. Pearson found himself a new home in September at San Luis Obispo in District V. Draftsman W. F. Skrocki and field inspector Cliff LaFountaine were transferred to District VII in Los Angeles. Four employees resigned outright while four others were laid off because of lack of work.

Nate McCorkle, a draftsman in the District beginning in September 1928 went on vacation at Christmas time and just failed to ever return to work. Nate eventually worked his way up into a responsible position in the survey and plans department at Sacramento so apparently his District IX experience did not cast a blight on his career.

Ben Gallagher after serving admirably as resident engineer on the two large grading and paving projects from the Kern County line to Coso Junction was appointed to be the Maintenance Superintendent in charge of all of the southern end of the District. Expanding maintenance problems and personnel made it imperative that the load be shared. Dwight Wonacott at Bishop was in charge of the northern section and Ben was given the south. He made his headquarters at Independence effective September 1, 1930.

The U.S. Secretary of Agriculture announced on May 29, that expenditures approved for forestry road projects included

\$95,000 for grading 2.7 miles and surfacing 11.1 miles from Coleville in Mono County to the Nevada State line.

Work on the trans-Sierra highway from Lone Pine to Porterville finally bogged down due to the extreme grades and hard rock encountered. These doughty road builders actually built a zig zag road up the mountain a measured 4.35 miles from Carroll Creek but were still 15 miles short of the summit at the Tulare County line.

While not then or later a State highway, the road from Stove Pipe Wells in Death Valley to famed Scotty's Castle near the extreme north end of the valley is unique and accounts of its construction in 1930 from the press are interesting: "A crew of men and tractors are at work on the building of a road to Death Valley Scotty's ranch in the Grapevines connecting the Eichbaum road at Stove Pipe Wells. This road will cut the present distance from Stove Pipe Wells to Scotty's to 35 miles. The only route heretofor has been via Beatty and Bonnie Clair, a distance of 85 miles. The new road will follow the floor of Death Valley straight as the crow flies and link the famous ranch with its \$1,000,000 mansion that has been eight years in the building directly with the outside world via Darwin and Lone Pine. Work is being rushed to have the road open for tourist travel within a short time. This new road will also open up some of the most interesting country in the northern part of Death Valley including the Ubehebe district with its gigantic crater and rich copper deposits.

"Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Crosby, Mr. and Mrs. E. M. Chamberlain, Mr. and Mrs. C. M. Chamberlain and sons Don and Ward and Don MacRostie made a trip over the new Death Valley road Sunday, March 30, by Stove Pipe Wells Hotel and Scotty's Castle. That new route is 38 miles long; their time over it was one hour 40 minutes."

BISHOP TO MOJAVE

The culmination of many years of promotion, financing and construction was reached in early 1931 with the completion of State highway contract No. 29VC5 on road IX-Ker-23-C,D from Cinco to 7 miles north of Ricardo. This was the "Golden Spike" project, the one job which finally united Bishop with Los Angeles by a solid ribbon of hard surfaced highway. The dreams of the early promoters were at last fulfilled.

In 1910 the Inyo Good Road Club started its tub thumping for just such an occasion. The Good Road Club no longer had its indefatigable secretary W. Gillette Scott, and it would seem on the face of things that it was too bad that he could not be present at this crowning event. The Inyo Good Road Club no longer existed but the untiring Mr. Scott was still around. By now he was living in Lancaster and energetically promoting the interests of a new organization picturesquely entitled the Three Flags Highway. No longer sectionally interested as the El Camino Sierra was, Mr. Scott was now involved in highways running the full width of the coast and beyond; roads under the flags of Mexico, the United States and of Canada. Undoubtedly Mr. Scott was present at the finishing link in the Bishop to Los Angeles highway.

In fitting commemoration of the completion of the Bishop to Mojave road a gigantic celebration was planned for February 22 to be held in Red Rock Canyon. A committee consisting of District Engineer Frank Somner and B. W. Holeman and G. W. Dow of the High Sierra Recreation Association met with Rudolph Hagen of Red Rock Canyon and worked out mutually satisfactory arrangements for the celebration.

Mr. Hagen was the owner of the largest part of Red Rock Canyon. Frank Somner and the Hagen family had had a running feud for several years over the question of right of way for the highway through the canyon. It is further evidence of the status of Frank Somner that he was finally able to obtain the right of way, even though having to resort to condemnation proceedings, and still be on such amiable terms with the Hagens as to be able to negotiate with them for details of a celebration.

It was Mr. Hagen's desire to make Red Rock Canyon a memorial to his son Ricardo who died there and for whom the way station and former post office were named. There was even talk of Red Rock Canyon being made into a national monument.

District Office Engineer E. K. Guion waxed poetically on one occasion while writing about the portion of the project through the canyon when he wrote: "The marvels of nature through the famous Red Rock Canyon are being, in part,



RED ROCK CANYON

rearranged by the handiwork of man, as a splendid new highway is being constructed which will make this wonder spot available to the ever increasing number of nature loving tourists."

Almost before the road through Red Rock Canyon was completed a desert storm hit this region with fierce intensity. No damage was done to the new road through the canyon. Water from this storm was reported as making a flowing stream of the town of Mojave's main street.

The description of the February 22, 1931 celebration is best described by quoting from the February 26th issue of the Inyo Register: "Celebration of completion of paved highway through Red Rock providing a continuous paved road from Los Angeles through Owens Valley and to the top of Sherwin Hill was as great a success as the most sanguine could anticipate. The few days preceding Sunday were said to have been as disagreeable as any the desert had ever experienced. Dust and haze still lingered in the air enough to conceal the mountain view from the highway and a chill wind accompanied most of the travelers until they reached the canyon. In the great amphitheatre selected for the occasion much of the sandy ground was still soft from recent rains; but sunshine from a cloudless sky and without even a stir of breeze gave a perfect day for a big picnic. Estimates that at least 2500 persons were present and that there were from 800 to 1,000 cars in the canyon are considered conservative. More than 600 cars were counted sometime before they quit coming and many were left out nearer the highway. The setting of events was magnificent. There the ageless carved wall of the canyon rises to a greater height than at any place along the main road, and in a long curving formation a natural background faces a valley large enough to accommodate several times as large a crowd. Good music by the Antelope Valley band, from Lancaster, Palmdale and environs, opened the program and entertained the crowd during its waiting.

"B. W. Holeman, President of the High Sierra Recreation Association which sponsored the affair, introduced B. E. Johnson as chairman. At this distance, without notes, we cannot say who of the several speakers talked about what, beyond the fact that the addresses were short and interesting, and each pertinent to the occasion. The subjects included history, outlines of highway development with due tribute to the pioneers in their effort, and especially to Division Engineer Somner's success in this District; the fact that the day was the 199th anniversary of Washington's birthday; congratulations from other communities over the fine road that has been provided for the eastern slope of the Sierras; brief outlines of early explorations in the vicinity; the work and intentions of the Highway Commission; the sums that are being used to provide the State with good roads, the assistance that Burton Frasher has given in making the attraction known; and the pioneer work of W. G. Scott and the Inyo Good Road Club.

"Those who spoke besides the chairman included F. B. Hitchings, editor of the South Antelope Valley Press, of Palmdale; L. S. Tudor, Secretary of the Lancaster Chamber of Commerce; J. O. Hart, Supervisor of Kern County from Taft; H. B. Brashear, Traffic Engineer of Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce; Carl E. McStay, Field Secretary of the Automobile Club of Southern California; Col. J. R. White, Supervisor Sequoia National Park, with greetings from Park Director Horace M. Albright; John O. Botkin, Mayor of Tujunga; Earl L. Kelly, Chairman State Highway Commission; Harry Hopkins, Highway Commissioner; and special representative of Governor Rolph; A. S. Tibbetts, Outing Editor Los Angeles Express. Governor F. B. Balzar of Nevada sent a telegram regretting that urgent matters prevented his attending."

W. Gillette Scott in his new role as front man for the three nation's "Three Flags International Highway Association" was so successful in selling the idea to the people of the Mojave desert area that a meeting was called in Lancaster for the purpose of organizing to join with other similar units in promoting the good of a great highway running from Mexico to Canada and lying east of the Sierras. Two directors elected to the Association from Bishop were Senator Joe Riley and Karl P. Keough.

With the inauguration of Governor Rolph came also a new Highway Commission and a new Director of Public Works, Col. Walter Garrison replacing Bert Meek. Charles Purcell was retained as State Highway Engineer.

The State legislature added 804 miles of roads to the State highway system with the signing of the Edwards-Kline Bill. Assemblyman Kline represented Inyo-Mono area in the lower legislative house. Included in these 804 miles were the Bishop to Nevada State line road via Laws and Benton Station and the connection in southeastern Mono County from Oasis to the Nevada State line. Both of these roads had been advocated for State routes for some time but particularly so had the Montgomery Pass outlet from Bishop via Benton Station. The inclusion of this road was the climax of long and anxious campaigning. The Benton Station road, known as Route 76, added 41.0 miles to the State system while the Oasis extension added only 3.1 miles to existing Route 63.

Senator Joe Riley introduced bills into the legislature covering the addition of the Piute Pass, Lone Pine-Porterville and Death Valley roads to the highway system. It was reported though that this action was done with little hope of doing more than keeping the subject alive in official circles.

A Trans-Sierra road conference was held in Bakersfield in January sponsored by the San Joaquin Valley Tourist and Travel Association which meeting attracted a score of Owens Valley men in the interest of the Lone Pine-Porterville road. In July a picnic celebration was held at Grouse Meadows on the western side of the Sierras to drum up interest in the Lone Pine-Porterville road. Locally it was recorded that interest in the road on the eastern slopes appeared to have fallen lamentably, partly at least because of the City of Los Angeles being somewhat cooler than lukewarm toward the project.

As part of the reconstruction and improvement work done on the Tioga grade under Division Engineer Somner's direction, a bridge was built to carry traffic past what had become known as Dodge Point. The grade following the hill face, makes a sharp curve at that place and the bridge in the form of a sidehill viaduct replaced the curve. The name was given for a man who, after stopping his car at that spot, threw it in gear wrongly and was killed as it tumbled over the precipice to come to rest as a shattered wreckage far below. Widening of the whole grade to 24' from an inadequate 12' was in progress and necessitated much cutting back into the hill. It would be much more satisfactory thereafter especially to nervous drivers.

State forces were also engaged in widening the narrow portion on both slopes of the Conway Grade north of Mono Lake.

Summertime desert and high mountain cloudbursts were particularly damaging to State highway facilities during August and September. Such meteorological phenomena occur regularly each summer and early fall in the desert areas but so wandering and irregular is their pattern that for years much storms may do little or no damage to man's transportation facilities and then again they can hit the highways with devastating force. Cloudbursts having their centers some distance away from the highways may result in no water or only a trickle reaching the highways' culverts, most of the water having gone underground into the desert's sands. If the cloudburst is near the highway a solid sheet of water may approach and cross the highway with little or no hope for the safety of the unlucky motorist who may be trapped in its path.

It is this unpredictability of a storm's water pathway which makes the placement of culverts or bridges no more than pure guesswork.

This August a cloudburst took out the retaining wall of a fill at a point known as the Blue Slide on the Tioga Pass road. One of the worst ~~storms~~ ever experienced on the

desert hit the highway between the mouth of Red Rock Canyon and Mojave. Twenty miles of the Southern Pacific railroad in this area were reported under a foot or more of washed material. A sedan was caught by the fury of the storm at Freeman Wash and carried from the road. The Tehachapi route was washed out. Both Montgomery Pass and Westgard Pass were reported damaged.

Supervisor Charles Brown of Shoshone reported that 190 miles of road in his southeastern Inyo County district were washed out in the cloudbursts. In order to attend the Inyo County Board of Supervisors' meeting he had to travel south from Shoshone to Baker and over to Mojave and then north to Independence. Brown reported that the usually mild and mostly underground Amargosa River was a raging stream 150' wide and 10' deep.

State highway construction in 1931 resolved itself down to five major contracts with all of them being in the Mono County area.

The Macco Construction Company was the contractor for grading and bituminous treated rock surfacing from Yerby's to Casa Diablo Hot Springs. For this 12.32 mile contract they were paid \$260,346. Sam Risley was resident engineer assisted by Joe Stanley, Paul Evans, George Ullom, Al Simmons, R. L. Moses, A. W. Carr, I. de La Vaux and R. B. River.

From Casa Diablo Hot Springs to Crestview, a distance of 8.5 miles the grading and bituminous treated rock surfacing was done by the Morrison-Knudson Company at a cost of \$147,969. The resident engineer was Al Briney and he had help from Paul Evans, Art Root, Styles Soderstrand, E. W. Taylor, E. D. Davis, D. C. Johnson, R. G. Cornell, G. W. Ogden, A. W. Carr, I. de La Vaux, R. L. Moses, R. B. River and H. H. Heeter.

The Robinson-Roberts Company picked off an extensive grading project from Dressler's Corner, west of Bridgeport, past Fales Hot Springs to Sonora Junction, a total of 14.22 miles for which they received \$140,674. Walter Mathews was the resident engineer assisted solely by the ever present Paul Evans.

A short 0.61 miles grading project was contracted for by Kennedy-Bayles Construction Company for \$5,692. This work was done to close an uncompleted gap between 1.9 and 1.2 miles south of Coleville. Sam Risley handled this project without any assistance. This project was completed exactly one month after it was awarded.

The Southwest Paving Company undertook to place the surfacing on the 12.94 mile stretch from Sonora Junction to



*Power Broom on Base Rock Construction
Mono County*



*Bridge Crossing of West Walker River
Mono County*

4 miles south of Coleville. This project was the one on which the grading was done a year ago by the Kennedy-Bayles Construction Company. This bituminous treated rock surfacing cost the State \$87,626. Charley Shultz and Walter Mathews each had turns at being the resident engineer on this job. Albert Lamb, F. N. (Bob) Roberts, Paul Evans, D. Bouch, Wm. Kaill, Wm. Van Dyck, Glenn Myers, Dean Bowers, H. B. Robinson and Robt. Ostrander all assisted at one time or another and in one capacity or another.

As was customary the highway travelers reported rough going in their journeys between Bishop and Reno due to the large amount of road construction, maintenance operations and consequent detours.

Because of the nature of the national economy resulting from the depression days the work was definitely slacking off. Then, too, the critical highway projects east of the Sierras had gradually been taken care of and funds which had been funneled into this area were now being aimed at other and more critical areas in the State.

Consequently the personnel developed in this area, because of the concentrated construction program, were gradually released. The more competent and experienced were transferred to other districts while the others had to fend for themselves.

Rowley Clarke and Albert Clarke were transferred to District VIII at San Bernardino as were Charley Mackey and H. F. Meinke. C. T. Shulta transferred to District V at San Luis Obispo.

E. K. Guion's personnel record card, under date of June 13, 1931, carries a notation that he was dismissed by the State Civil Service Commission. It was no local secret that Guion and Somner did not see eye to eye on how the District should be run. Harold Hansen who had been operating in the field as a resident engineer was brought into the District Office to take over Guion's duties as District Office Engineer.

By the end of 1931 the permanent staff payroll recorded only 29 persons. The more prominent in the future affairs of the District who joined hands with others of District IX in 1931 were Finis N. (Bob) Roberts, Senior Engineering Field Aid, and Sabina Collins, Intermediate Stenographer Clerk.

During the fall of 1930 the employees of the State of California had formed a united front to promote and sell to the people of the State through the medium of the ballot

a first class retirement program. This successful program was spearheaded by Thomas H. Stanton, head of the Highway Testing and Research Laboratory.

Realizing what benefits could be obtained by this solid and coordinated effort, the leaders in this retirement campaign succeeded in forming a permanent State employees organization. This organization came into formal being in the spring of 1931 with Tom Stanton being elected the first State president of C.S.E.A. (California State Employees Association). The State organization was composed of sub-chapters located throughout the State as a whole.

In the geographical area covered by Highway District IX, High Sierra Chapter No. 12 was organized in April of 1931 with 85 highway employees as charter members. Preston L. Fite was elected as the first chapter president. R. L. Hildebrand was the initial vice president with Almeda Kinney the Secretary and H. Y. Horn the treasurer. It was not until December that the official charter was granted.

This chapter held its first social event in a party held at Keough's Hot Springs on June 6 and was reported to be quite an affair. E. K. Guion as chairman of the entertainment committee was hailed for his most successful efforts.

Another Governor of the State of California saw fit to visit Inyo-Mono counties in the form and person of James Rolph Jr. His official party for this October visit included Col. Walter Garrison, Director of Public Works, E. Raymond Cato, Chief of the California Highway Patrol and Russell Bevans, Chief of the Bureau of Motor Vehicles. Their official hosts in Mono and Inyo Counties were George Delury and Senator Joe Riley. Governor Rolph in a formal speech touched on many items but the currently most important item covered was work employment to combat and relieve the depression.

Arrangements along this line were first in the hands of Mayor D. E. Lutz of Bishop who was to receive application for pick and shovel work on the highways. Each laborer would receive \$4.00 for his day's work.

On top of the depression problems and anxieties the winter of 1931-32 produced the greatest storm in many years. All of Mono County was covered with snow. Conway Summit was reported as having 12' of snow.

The memory of man is short and in addition times do change. Heavy snows had occurred in the past in Mono County but then it didn't occur to the populace to attempt to move from place to place. But now the horseless carriage had changed all previous modes of operation. The people were not

now stocking with fuel, food and other provisions in anticipation of a hibernating winter but were depending upon the motor vehicle to bring it to them. A few open winters had lulled the population into a false sense of what the motor vehicle could do for them.

As a consequence of hardship encountered appeals were made to Frank Somner for help. Having no snow removal equipment at hand there was nothing that he could personally do. He did express himself as wholly in sympathy with the need for maintaining Route 23 from Bishop to Bridgeport as an open winter road. He further went on record as saying that arrangements could not be made for snow removal in time to do much good that winter but that it would be done before next winter.

The people of Mono County however wanted direct action and direct and immediate action was taken by direct appeal to Senator Joe Riley with the mandate that he contact Governor Rolph for the purpose of getting an order, and equipment for immediate snow removal operations. The faith of the Monoites was not misplaced for Senator Joe secured assurance from Sunny Jim Rolph that prompt steps would be taken to open the Bishop to Bridgeport highway. Senator Joe was then reported as battling it out with the Highway Department at Sacramento to get the actual snow plow sent to Mono County as he was convinced that snow could not be removed by promises but by machinery.

On February 19 a snow plow actually arrived in the snow bound area. This plow was a rotary bucket plow and was immediately put into operation by the Maintenance Department. Lacking any organized maintenance stations the headquarters of this snow crew were right with the plow itself. This made for rugged personnel as housing was of necessity in tents. The cook wagon, presided over by George Finchum, followed right along behind the plow. The crews worked on a salary plus board and lodging rate. A rented building at McGee Creek and temporary shelter at Crestview Lodge made the rigors of snow removal not so extreme when the crews were within hailing distance of these two areas.

The heavy use of dog sleds in solving local transportation problems also added additional effort to the snow removal difficulties because of the packing effect of the sleds on the snow.

Since snow removal, except for spring opening of the high passes, was a novel operation the highway forces were "assisted" by a considerable number of the local population in efforts to speed up the opening of the highway.

In this connection the March 31st issue of the Bridgeport Chronicle Union has this to say about the snow

helpers: "Together with employees of the State Highway Department quite a number of our local people are busy this week assisting in the work of opening the State highway over Conway summit. It is expected that this road will be opened for travel in the course of a few days. We are informed that quite a number of the citizens of Mono Basin are donating their time and labor in this work. More power to their 'arms' in such needed enterprise."

In due time the highway was opened by the help of the highway, the public and the sun and traffic again resumed its normal problems.

Another innovation in the highway affairs east of the high mountains was the decision to place a traffic stripe down the center of the pavement. Previous to this time only small areas had had any striping done for the very good reason that very little continuous length of pavement was available for the placement of the stripe. With the closing of the gap at Red Rock Canyon a continuous ribbon of asphalt pavement was available and a contract for \$1,042 was awarded to B. G. Carroll of San Diego to place a 4 inch wide solid traffic stripe over the full distance of 190 miles from Mojave in the south to the Mono County line.

A contract was awarded to Carl Ingalls, Inc. for the construction of a three span reinforced concrete bridge over the West Walker River just north of Sonora Junction. The completed cost of this structure was \$15,333.

George Herz & Co. was awarded a construction contract for surfacing the 14.22 mile stretch only just graded by the Robinson Roberts & Co. This bituminous treated rock surfacing cost the State \$135,901. Walter Mathews was also the resident engineer on the surfacing aided and abetted by Paul Evans, Al Lamb, E. W. Taylor, W. W. Russell, W. H. Heeter, R. B. River, J. J. Vance, W. B. Chidester and Paul Harris.

Upon the promotional scene, that inveterate exponent of good highways, W. Gillette Scott, saw another of his enterprises gain permanent status. On May 6, 1932 in Reno, Nevada, the Three Flags Highway Association, which was the brain child of Mr. Scott, became a complete reality. Scott headed the delegation from Lancaster. G. W. Dow of Lone Pine was elected president of this new highway booster club. B. W. Holeman, G. Crawford and D. E. Lutz represented Bishop. A board of directors representing each of the states along the route was elected and the Three Flags Highway Association was in business.

On May 31, 1932 Frank Somner picked up his hat and left his office for the last time. At the age of 68 years 9 months and 21 days Frank completed the decision that he had been pondering within himself to retire. Although not yet at

the compulsory retirement age of 70 Frank felt that his work was done and that he should turn the work over to a younger man. Frank was tired but not worn out and the future years were to give this huge man the rest he deserved.

Upon his retirement after 20 years as District Engineer for the Division of Highways its official publication "California Highways and Public Works" devoted a page and a half to the career of Frank Somner. The Inyo Register took the liberty of printing excerpts from it plus some added comments of its own: "Mr. Somner was born August 10, 1863 in Dunedin, New Zealand and was educated in Levuka, in the Figi Islands and in the University of California. He started his professional career as County Surveyor of Plumas County in 1884; in 1886 he became Assistant Topographer of U.S. Geological Survey and in 1887 entered the employ of the Southern Pacific for which he was Location Engineer and later he was Road Master in charge of tracks and bridge building in the Red Bluff division. In 1903 he became an engineer for the Diamond Match Co.

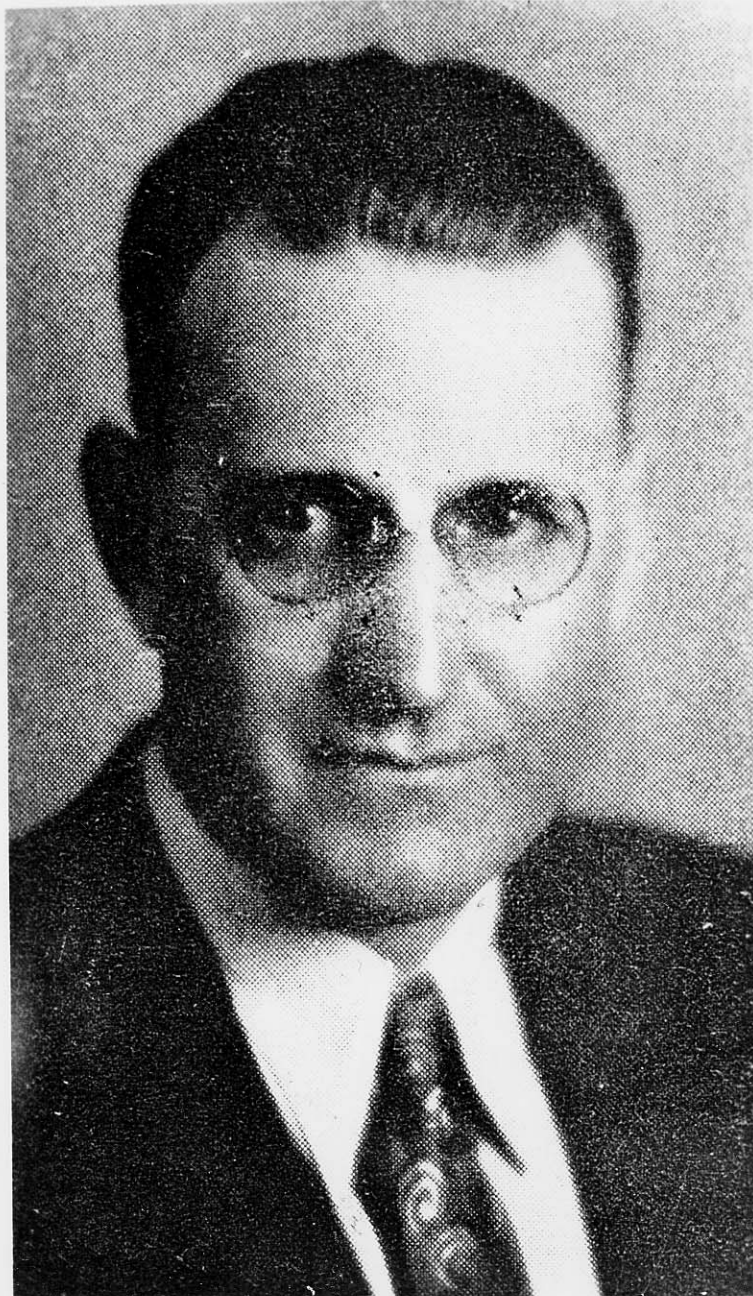
"He entered the State's employ when highway work was first started and in 1912 was appointed District Engineer of District I with headquarters at Willets. That district comprises the coast counties from Mendocino north to the Oregon line. It was pioneer road building through heavy vegetation and travel from headquarters to the northern part of the district had to be by boat. He laid out and built the noted Redwood Highway with the State's first power shovel for highway work and he also built a sawmill for needed lumber. Eel River was bridged with a double timber arch bridge 155' long over a 160' chasm, the bridge being framed on the sides of the canyon and swung into place by cables, blocks and tackle. The first section of road built by convict labor was in the same district. Nine bridges 150' to 300' long were part of the difficult undertaking. Mr. Somner was transferred to Division IX in October 1923. It was reported that his transfer to this territory was considered something of a banishment, because of political reasons not according with the wishes of the then ruling powers. That may or may not be true; but it was a lucky break for this district. Reports from people along the Redwood highway show the esteem in which he was held there, and that appreciation has been repeated to the utmost in his career on this Sierra slope. He has developed one of the State's important highways, to a high degree of value and in his retirement he carries the best wishes of very many friends, throughout the district to which he became sincerely attached."

With the passing from the highway scene of Francis G. Somner came the end of another milestone in the highway story. During Mr. Somner's eight and one half years period as District Engineer he had accomplished the elimination of the highway isolation of Inyo and Mono Counties by building the road to the

south. Extensive modernization of Route 23 in Mono County had been accomplished and only minor gaps remained to be completed and Somner had already laid the groundwork for their completion. Truly the work for which destiny sent Frank Somner to Bishop was accomplished and his place among the pioneer roadbuilders of California is safe and secure. One fact stands out as certain, Frank Somner is firmly enshrined in the hearts of those who knew and worked with him in this land of sage and sand, snow and high country.

Upon the occasion of his retirement his many friends and employees tendered him a farewell banquet in his honor. In his retirement speech Frank Somner explained why it was that he retired at the early age of 63. He advised the assembled crowd that he was ashamed to retire so young but that the doctor told him that his heart was not able to take the load and that his liver was in terrible condition. He admitted that he had only one kidney left and that one was bad. But that outside of that and the fact that he had stomach ulcers and cataracts on both eyes there was nothing particular wrong with him.

And here, logically, is the end of the second act in the moving and dramatic story of the roads and the peoples who use and build them in this land beyond the mountains.



JOHN W. VICKREY
DISTRICT ENGINEER

BOOK THREE

J. W. VICKREY

As of June 1, 1932 the responsibilities and cares of the highways and of the personnel of District IX were placed squarely in the hands of John Wilbur Vickrey. There must have been some satisfaction to Frank Somner in this appointment as Vick had gained much of his highway knowledge from Somner in the Redwood Highway region.

Vickrey's engineering experience had started with Los Angeles County and progressed through work with the Southern Pacific Railroad prior to his work with the California Division of Highways. His most immediate past assignment had been as District Maintenance Engineer in District III, then located at Sacramento.

Mr. Vickrey must have made a very favorable impression upon his first arrival at Bishop as witnessed by the fact that the local press gave him a grand welcome and publicly wrote that District IX anticipated as satisfactory acquaintance and relationship with him as with his predecessor.

The new District Engineer took over his duties at a generally unenviable period. With the main line highway in the final state of construction, the outlook for new construction or problems of location to match the energy and vitality of the new engineer was very bleak indeed. With the depression on and a make work program in effect the very core of an engineer's soul, if there be such, was rebuked at the necessarily inefficient operation and lack of real accomplishment by such work.

Under such trying conditions it was not to be wondered at that Vickrey did not respond to the feeling of the high country. If man's work is not all consuming it is difficult for him to accept his surroundings. It was generally believed that Vickrey did not really learn to love the desert and the mountains because the work load did not challenge his unbounded vision and energy.

As of July 1, 1932 District IX had a total of 436.8 recorded miles of highway under its care and protection. Of this mileage 330.0 miles were primary highway and 156.8 miles came under the secondary highway classification. Superintendent Ben Gallagher at Independence had 279 miles for maintenance while Superintendent Dwight Wonacott at Bishop took care of 208 miles.

Two major contracts were started in late 1932, both of which were for short connecting links of completed highways in Mono County.

The Oilfields Trucking Company of Bakersfield made their debut in construction work in District IX by contracting to grade 2.36 miles from the mouth of the West Walker Canyon to a point two miles south of Coleville. This project cost the sum of \$176,891. The resident engineer on this project was E. W. Taylor who was assisted by E. D. Davis and Paul Harris.

The last contract let in 1932 was for portions totaling 4.27 miles between Whisky Creek and Convict Creek. This grading and bituminous treated rock surfacing contract cost \$53,592 and was contracted to the Southwest Paving Company.

W. S. (Bill) Dolliver finally escaped from his previously almost exclusive surveying and drafting room assignments to be the resident engineer on this project. As assistants he had Blair Geddes, E. D. Davis, E. W. Taylor, Paul Evans, Al Lamb, George Ullom, Kenneth Peirce, Lloyd Bradley, W. W. Russell, J. J. Vance, Dean Bowers and F. N. Roberts.

Tioga Pass was opened to traffic this year considerably later than usual due to the extremely heavy snow pack laid down by the winters storms. June 30 was the date and because of the lateness of the season and because of depression conditions the usual celebration and free barbecue were passed over by the citizens of Leevining.

With the memory of last winter's unusually heavy snowfall and the attendant hardships due to the roads being closed, the citizens of Mono County took early steps to see that equipment and manpower were available to combat the elements that defied man's efforts to keep an open road. A citizens meeting at the county seat at Bridgeport resulted in the formation of the Mono County Business Men's Association, for the express purpose of pointing out the necessity of a permanent, full time, snow removal program. Acting on the urging of this Association the Mono County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution embracing a three point highway program: (1) That highway construction be completed with as little detriment to travel as possible; (2) That construction now underway be speedily completed and particularly that a contract be let for new construction between Crestview and Deadman so that it will not cause a break in next year's travel, and; (3) That every effort be made to maintain an open highway throughout the winter.

Whether this action had any real results toward energizing the snow removal program or not is debatable. The facts remain though that additional snow removal equipment was assigned to this area and although the road was closed

at times during the ensuing winter, it was opened again speedily. This winter in Mono County was not as severe as the previous winter and this helped the District IX snow fighters in their efforts to keep the highways open.

Contrariwise the winter in northern Inyo County was something for the book. The snow storm in mid-January 1933 was by claim of the oldest inhabitants the daddy of all storms. The snow that will become historic laid down 56 inches in Bishop. The water content of these 56 inches of snow amounted to 4.83 inches of water - nearly as much as a normal complete year's precipitation.

In September Mr. Vickrey had as his guest at the Bishop Rotary Club meeting State Highway Commissioner Harry Hopkins. Because of the interest in highway matters this meeting was held on a Friday evening so that all people interested might attend. He gave an interesting review on highway problems, quoted statistics on work done and predicted what was yet to be done. He pointed out that Inyo and Mono Counties had been well treated in receiving an allotment of \$230,000 of federal relief money for their road improvements while some much larger counties were to receive none at all. Senator Joe Riley came in for special commendation from Hopkins because of his constant activity for the interest of his district.

Two weeks later Governor Rolph made his second appearance in person to the Owens Valley and the Mono Mountains. His trip was apparently in the interest of highway relief projects.

While there was considerable talk about the extra federal relief funds and the projects upon which these funds were to be expended, the red tape which seemed to surround such programs was so much that it wasn't until 1933 that this program swung into actual operation. There were, however, 136 men employed on half time or direct make-work labor projects on the highway during the winter of 1932-33 for which work the sum of \$71,000 was expended.

The first of these projects was a grading and bituminous treated selected material project covering 6.12 miles from Keough Hot Springs to Bishop. The final cost of this project was \$79,662 and the contractor was Hemstreet and Bell from Marysville. These relief projects specified a considerable amount of hand labor and restricted labor crews to 30 hours per week, thus allowing several crews to work on the project.

W. S. (Bill) Dolliver was resident engineer on the job and he had so many assistants it nearly looked as if the

engineers were on relief work also. Art Root, Blair Geddes, E. D. Davis, E. W. Taylor, Paul Evans, Al Lamb, George Ullom, Kenneth Peirce, D. Bouch, W. W. Russell, Lloyd Bradley, J. J. Vance, Dean Bowers and F. M. Benton appeared on the State payrolls of this project.

The second of these relief projects to get underway was the regrading and resurfacing of the highway northerly from Bishop to the Round Valley Road, a distance of 7.0 miles. This project was on the same general alignment as the 1921 job done by Greer. This time Basich Brothers undertook to modernize and widen the roadbed and to place a selected material, oiled surfacing for which they were paid the sum of \$57,347.

Al Briney was the resident engineer and except for Al Simmons as assistant he utilized the same engineering personnel as were assigned to the adjoining Hemstreet and Bell contract.

The State legislature convened again in the early months of 1933 and this time the marble halls in Sacramento were really tingling with highway matters. It was, of course an economy minded legislature but roads and highways had to be kept moving to bolster the exonomy and their upkeep was a problem. It was early ordained that the State highway system was to be enlarged and every county of the State was anxious to transfer some of its roads to the State especially so as to relieve the counties of the burden of maintenance and upkeep.

At the conclusion of this session the legislature took into the State highway system some 6800 miles of county roads and designated them all as secondary State highways. By this action the mileage of secondary State highways was more nearly equalized between the northern and southern groups of counties. Legislation also provided that all funds budgeted for construction and improvement were to be allocated equally between the primary and secondary road systems. The half apportioned to work on primary roads was divided in the ratio of primary mileage in the forty-five northern counties to the primary mileage in the thirteen southern counties.

Unfortunately while the legislature added approximately 6800 miles of roads to the State system, no new funds were provided for their upkeep. In fact the highways' problem was made ever difficult by legislating that an amount equal to 1/4 cent of the State's share of the three cent gasoline tax was to be apportioned to incorporated cities, in proportion to their population, for construction and maintenance of State highway routes through the cities.



General View of Route 23 in Mono Co.



June Lake Junction 1934

The administration of these 1/4¢ funds was delegated to the Division of Highways. By this method the smaller cities were given the advantage of the Division of Highways' organization and experience which also tended to see that improvements were kept to uniform standards.

This caused the creation of a new department in the Headquarters Office at Sacramento inasmuch as the Division of Highways was charged with the responsibilities in administering this 1/4¢ fund. Mr. L. V. Campbell was appointed Engineer of Cities and Cooperative Projects. Richard H. Wilson, formerly District Office Engineer, was appointed as Campbell's successor. Having only one incorporated city within the limits of District IX, Bishop, there was no major change in any department in the District Office. The official population of Bishop as of 1930 was 1149.

The State legislature also saw fit to lift the restriction stipulating that the State's share of the 1923 gasoline tax could not be used for new construction and provided that all funds accruing to the State for highway purposes be placed in a single fund. Provision was made that allocations to construction, reconstruction and maintenance be left in the hands of the California Highway Commission in the adoption of biennial budgets, with the restriction that an amount equal to not more than the revenue from one cent tax per gallon of gasoline be budgeted for maintenance and that administration charges should not exceed two percent of the revenue.

Because of the additional mileage three changes in the District setup of the Division of Highways were made. District III was moved to Marysville from Sacramento and District X's headquarters were moved from Sacramento to Stockton for more central locations. A new district designated as District XI was established at San Diego with its territory carved out of areas formerly administered by the Los Angeles and San Bernardino Districts.

Besides the new roads added to the District, District IX also now took over Route 23 from the Los Angeles County line to Mojave.

The new secondary roads and their mileages which were added to District IX in August of 1933 were:

Route 40	Route 23 to Route 76 at Benton Station	46.60 miles
Route 76	Lake Sabrina to Bishop	17.25 miles
Route 95	Near Coleville to Nevada State line	14.30 miles
Route 96	Bridgeport to Nevada State line	13.25 miles
Route 111	June Lake Loop	16.20 miles



*Route 96 The Sweetwater Road
1933*



*Route 96 Along East Walker River Reservoir
1933*

Route 112 Mammoth Lakes to Route 23	9.00 miles
Route 127 Tulare County line to San Bernardino County line	162.00 miles
Route 128 Death Valley Junction to Nevada State line	7.27 miles
Route 145 San Bernardino County line to Route 23	<u>35.27 miles</u>
Total	321.20 miles

This total of 321.2 miles added to the previous 486.8 miles of maintained highways plus the 16.7 miles of Kern-23-A now gave the district a total of 824.7 miles of State highways under maintenance. In addition to this mileage there were 15 miles of the Carroll Creek to Tulare County line highway on Route 127 and the 9.4 miles of Route 23 toward Alpine County from Coleville which were not constructed making a grand total of 849.1 miles under the protection of District IX.

As might have been expected Mr. Vickrey's tenure of office in Bishop was not for long. Since his official title consistently carried the appendage (Acting) it probably should have been deduced that Mr. Vickrey was present in Bishop for training purposes only. That this was so became a fact with the announcement that effective September 1, 1933 Vickrey was appointed to be District Engineer of District I at Eureka. Neither was Vick to spend any length of time in Eureka. In due course he was transferred to Headquarters Office as head of the newly formed Safety Department; eventually headed Highway Traffic; and then was promoted to be the Assistant State Highway Engineer in charge of Advance Planning, Traffic, Design and Highway Planning Surveys.

Here was a short but highly significant era in the progress of District IX and brings to an end another milestone in the passing parade of the highway story.



L to R - J. Wagnon, D. Miles, S.W. Lowden, R.H. Stalnaker, Ned Bassett. April 1912.



*S.W. Lowden - Location Route 99
Siskiyou Co. July 1913*



S.W. Lowden Oct. 1950

BOOK FOUR

S. W. LOWDEN

With the departure of J. W. Vickrey for the coastal fog of Eureka it was announced in the local press that J. B. Woodson had been appointed Acting District Engineer. Woodson had for some time been in charge of the District Right of Way Department. Having been District Engineer at Fresno his appointment as Acting District Engineer at Bishop was hailed as good news by the local highway enthusiasts. The next issue of the paper brought forth a retraction and a regret that Mr. Woodson would not be the new District Engineer. The reason given was that Mr. Woodson did not have the proper civil service standing.

Mr. Woodson had won for himself a warm spot in the hearts of the folks of Inyo-Mono and the majority of them wanted him to have this top highway position. Mr. Woodson was, however, transferred to the San Francisco area and given greater responsibilities in their Right of Way organization. In reporting this transfer the Inyo Register had this to say: "Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Woodson leave today for San Francisco to which point Mr. Woodson has been transferred from the Highway Division Office here. Doubtless there are reasons why the State moves its men around so that almost as soon as one has become well acquainted in a locality he gets orders to pick up and go somewhere else. However such reasons are not strongly apparent. Like the other highway folks who have been thus shuffled away from here their departure is regretted."

On September 8, 1933 there walked a man into the front door of the Bishop Highway Office, not tall, not short, rather lean and with a hungry look. For size, physically, his predecessors had it all over him. But for energy, compatibility, foresightedness and resourcefulness his equal would be somewhat difficult to locate. For the next 17 years and one month Spencer W. Lowden was to hold the wheel of District IX with a firm and steady grip. Not flamboyant and certainly no show off it cannot be said that he blazed his way over the highway firmament but rather he should be compared to a steady burning light. His rock bound dependability and his extreme devotion to his job resulted in the steady increase in the quality of the roads in his charge until at the end of his tenure at Bishop the excellent system of State highways stood as a monument to his ability.

Just where, or how, or under what circumstances Mr. C. H. Purcell, State Highway Engineer, reached into the barrel and pulled out Spence to be Acting District Engineer at Bishop is a question probably never to be satisfactorily answered.

Spence did not hold a civil service rating comparable to that of Somner or Vickrey, his name was not on a civil service list and yet Mr. Purcell saw something in the very backwoods, country District Maintenance Engineer at Redding which told him that Spence would be a success at Bishop.

Spencer came to Bishop as Acting District Engineer at his same salary and with his same Senior Highway Engineer rating. Spence undoubtedly never asked for the job and yet it was characteristic of him to accept the more responsible job away from his family ties and in a new country, entirely without asking for a raise or questioning the move. This devotion to his life's work is probably one of the dominating qualities of his character.

Statistically Spencer W. Lowden was born on April 27, 1888, at Lowden's Ranch on the Trinity River. Spence attended St. Mary's College in Oakland and received his technical education at Vander Naillen School of Engineering also in Oakland, graduating in 1910. Just before his 24th birthday he joined hands with the fledgling highway organization. His name first graced the District II payroll on April 3, 1912 as a rodman under Chief of Party Russ Stalnaker. He progressed up the scale with District II until November 12, 1928 at which time he took a year's leave of absence. He came back to work with District V at San Luis Obispo on November 12, 1929 but only stayed there until January 31, 1930 at which time he returned to Redding at the request of District Engineer H. S. Comly.

When Spencer took control, and it was also characteristic of him that he really took control, there were 824.7 miles of State highways in District IX. The main line from the Los Angeles County Line to Coleville was in good condition. Where roads were not completely reconstructed plans were essentially complete for their reconstruction. Up to now every single State highway contract in the District was for work on this common life line of the area, Route 23. One major day labor project had been authorized on the Walker Pass route.

Therefore, in the main it may be construed that the main line in District IX was well taken care of or would soon be so. It was thus indeed fortunate for Spence's peace of mind that of the 824.7 miles in the District 337.9 were new secondary roads added by the 1933 legislature. Almost without exception these new roads were dirt or gravel roads, built, or rather come into existence, to no particular standards.

These roads, although stepchildren in the highway family, were entitled to the same share of the family's worldly goods and thus it was that Spence had his challenge. These rough roads first had to be logged, surveyed, plans formulated, right of way provided and financing arranged before a single cubic

yard of dirt was moved or a gallon of oil spread. This took time. A priority of work had to be established so that the limited finances allocated to this area would be spread in the most advantageous manner.

Of course there were other problems at hand too. These new roads had to have arrangements made for immediate maintenance. Existing maintenance stations were expanded to add personnel and equipment. New stations were formed at Panamint Springs, Death Valley Junction and at Shoshone to care for these desert highways.

The relief make work program was still underway. In fact 100 men were employed half time during the winter of 1933-34 at a cost of \$48,523. Regular highway maintenance activities were always underway. The winter of 1933-34 was only the third winter on which snow removal operations were on a year around basis and yet District IX led all other districts in the State of California in the expenditure of funds to keep an open road through the snow areas on any given route. The sum of \$37,795 was expended to keep the Bishop to Bridgeport road open. The only close competitor in volume of money spent was the Donner Pass road which cost the State \$36,636 to keep open. No other pass in the State cost over \$6,000 to keep open this winter.

The construction contracts which Spence inherited and which got underway late in the year 1933 were six in number, two in Inyo County and four in Mono County and all on the main line, Route 23. The first job to start was the 3.5 mile, bituminous treated, selected material surfacing project from Bishop northerly to the Owens Valley Canal. Basich Brothers did this work at a cost of \$24,851. Al Briney was the resident engineer, assisted by Paul Evans, George Ullom and E. D. Davis.

Following close on the heels of this project was the 5.74 mile project for portions between Dougherty's Corner (Beacon Tavern) to Birchim Canyon. This job involved some grading but was mainly responsible for the reshaping and resurfacing through the City of Bishop. Apparently this project was not too well thought of by the citizens if the following caustic comment by the local paper was truly indicative of the thoughts of the people:

"Surfacing of Main Street has been torn off by Basich Brothers machinery in preparation for complete rebuilding under State contract covering the highway from Shelly Hill to the Texaco Corners and from Pleasant Valley to Birchim Canyon. It is to be expected that the new construction through town will be enough of an improvement to justify its cost. To our uninformed view the main reason for tearing up a very good street was to provide work for somebody with money that could have



BISHOP
1934



104-23-D Sta 650 Finished surfacing
Cont 59VC2 View of Main St. looking South



BISHOP
1934



been used to better advantage on some other Inyo thoroughfare. The machinery engaged in tearing up Main Street went deep enough yesterday to hook on to a plank 18" or more under the surface and drag it to light. The street at that point, at the Bank of America corner, has been filled much during the years; the plank was the top of a culvert which once carried a stream across."

Basich Brothers collected \$130,311 for their work on this contract.

Al Briney was also the chief engineer for the State on this project aided and abetted at various times by A. P. McCarton, Joe Stanley, Ken Peirce, Paul Evans, Bill Kaill, George Ullom, Sid Silver, E. W. Taylor, Merle Ellis, Ammon, Allen and Regalia.

September saw the start of three of the projects in Mono County with the fourth started in early October.

Regrading in Rock Creek Canyon was done under contract to Hamstreet & Bell for a final cost of \$48,580 for this 3.7 miles long project. Selected material surfacing which was later oiled by State forces, was placed between Sherwin Hill Summit and Whisky Canyon.

Al Briney was officially in charge of this project in addition to the two going projects in Inyo County. Earl Davis, Paul Evans, Sid Silver and George Ullom did most of the on the spot engineering.

Basich Brothers, now becoming well entrenched in this area, bid low for the 6.2 miles of grading and bituminous treated rock surfacing from Point Ranch through Bridgeport to Dresslers Corner. For this work they were paid \$132,445.

The road along the westerly shore of Mono Lake was graded and surfaced by the Isbell Construction Company of Reno, Nevada on a contract costing \$55,312. The official title of this 2.9 mile job was from 2 miles north of Leevining to Mono Inn and Merle Ellis was the resident engineer. As helpers he had E. W. Taylor, Joe Stanley, W. A. MacInnes, Bob Roberts, D. J. Bouch, W. W. Russell, R. B. River, Ken Peirce, E. L. Smith, Herb O'Donnell and Lloyd Bradley.

A really major job was the construction from Crestview to 2.2 miles south of Rush Creek. This included the relocation over Deadman Summit. The work cost \$205,070 and was let to contract to the Southwest Paving Company. Covering 9.7 miles the bituminous treated select material surfacing was a part of the project along with the earthwork and culverts. A. P. McCarton was the resident engineer, his first major job in the District, and he was assisted by Merle Ellis,



*Conway
grade
area*



*Deadman Summit
area*

1934 Construction in Mono Co.

E. W. Taylor, Ken Peirce, Paul Evans, H. F. Graber, R. H. Barnwell, Herb O'Donnell, George Ullom, E. A. Shafer, Sidney Silver, H. R. Kreigh, Bob Roberts and a Johnny-come-lately Milton Harris .

A very important step in adequately caring for the highways was the opening in November of 1933 of a maintenance superintendent's headquarters at Mojave to administer maintenance operations throughout the southern portion of the desert. Grant Merrill was appointed superintendent at Mojave. Grant's former home was in Alpine County which made the change from forest to sand quite an appreciable one for him.

Along the personnel front during this period there was, among others, a change in the position of Chief Clerk. W. J. Reilly was transferred to the Stockton district and T. M. Hannon came back to Bishop for another period as Chief Clerk. His period as Chief Clerk lasted only for about two months when his resignation took effect. Replacing him was Almeda Kinney, later known as Almeda Wheeler. Almeda did not hold the civil service rating for Chief Clerk but so well did she do the work and so well did she get along with everyone that no efforts were made to replace her with an official Chief Clerk.

One of the major bulwarks of the district caved in on November 20, 1933 when W. S. (Bill) Dolliver announced his transfer to District V at San Luis Obispo. Most of Bill's work in the District had been in charge of the drafting room and in the getting out of the plans for the various projects. It was only of late that he had been out in the field as resident engineer in charge of contract work. Bill was a big man physically and capable of turning out a lot of work. He left a void in the District that took some considerable time to fill.

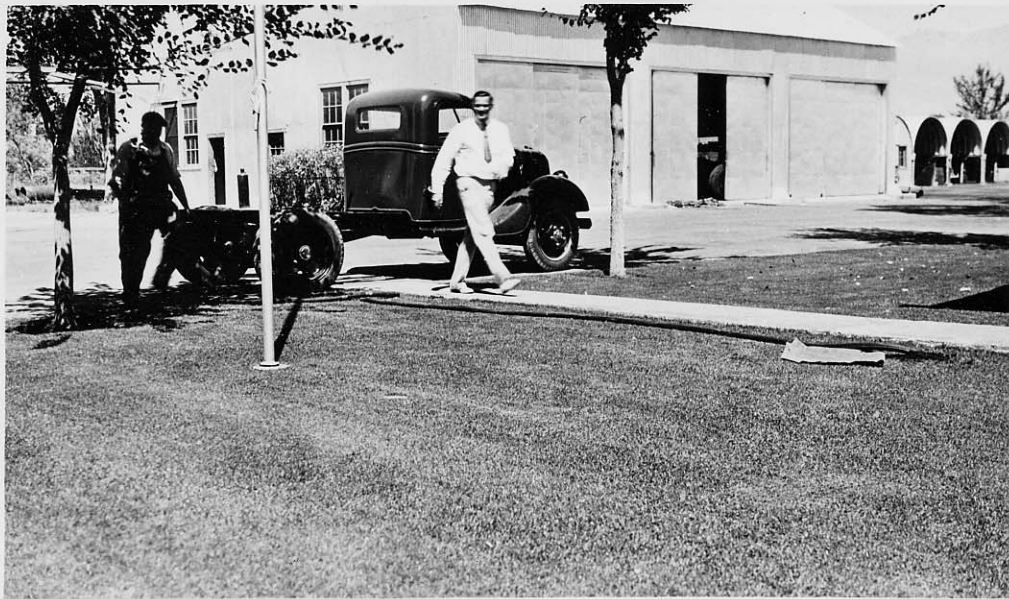
Walter Mathews who had been doing resident engineer work almost exclusively since May of 1929 was laid off in mid '33 due to a general reduction in forces. Al Lamb was also caught in this layoff.

Robert Ostrander was transferred to District VIII as also was J. J. Vance. Henry Noble was transferred to District VII. Ethel Towner, a steno in the District Office, was transferred to the newly created district office at San Diego.

The most dominant personality to be charged with responsibility of Shop 9 and the person to be longest endowed with this charge entered the picture in September of 1933 in the form and person of John Stein. Few there are who have ever listened to John who will ever forget him. He ran Shop 9. Ralph Hildebrand was the Shop Foreman having inherited the job from Harry Williams in 1928.



*BISHOP DISTRICT OFFICE
1934*



*Milt
Harris
in
white
duck*



*BISHOP
DISTRICT OFFICE
1934*

On the maintenance scene Superintendent Ben Gallagher, after having organized the Independence maintenance area, was transferred to the seaside section of California and entrusted with the highway cares in and around Ventura, operating out of the Los Angeles district office. Dwight Wonacott, having served his time in the Mono mountains, moved from Crestview to Independence to replace Ben. To fill the position at Crestview George McIvor was promoted from foreman and at the same time transferred from Angels Camp in the Stockton district.

In anticipation, which developed into realization, of heavy special maintenance work to be done to put the newly acquired State highways into travelable condition, a special crew was organized at Bishop. To head this crew and special work a superintendency was created and invested in the hands of Joe Lemos. Joe was formerly a foreman for the District X maintenance department located at Groveland.

Along the highway promotional scene the most active extra-curricular efforts were over the problem of whether Montgomery Pass or Westgard Pass would become the major outlet from the Owens Valley into Nevada. Whichever one was chosen as the popular route would receive the blessing of the Federal Government in the form of Federal funds for its construction to higher standards. This question was finally resolved in favor of the Montgomery Pass road and construction of the road in Nevada was started over Mt. Montgomery in the spring of 1934. This decision was important to the future of these two alternate routes as testified to by the fact that the Montgomery Pass route has steadily increased in importance through the years while the Westgard Pass route, owing to the collapse of the major mining activities at Goldfield, has just as steadily decreased in importance with the passage of time.

The Three Flags Highway Association was extremely active in this period in doing everything possible to promote tourist traffic and to advertise the highway and its scenic and recreational attractions. As far as strictly highway was concerned the major activity consisted of attempting to get a Federal Route number for the highway. A great deal of credit is due to this organization for aiding in securing road appropriations for construction.

May 10, 1934 saw the opening of Tioga Pass which was one of the earliest openings on record for this pass and was due to a combination of light snowfall and an early warm spring.

Only one State highway contract was started during 1934. This was only a small (\$7,691) contract for grading and placing a gravel surface from Whisky Canyon to Yerby's (Tom's Place). Hemstreet & Bell who had the contract adjoining on the south was the successful bidder. Al Briney was the resident



Normal

BOX CANYON



*After a
cloudburst*

*WESTGARD PASS
Route 63*



Westgard Summit



Roosevelt Tree at Big Pine

engineer and handled this project without any engineering assistants. The oiling of the general surfacing was done by day labor utilizing State forces.

Not too many personnel changes occurred during 1934 because of the real limited amount of work underway. Herb O'Donnell joined hands with the District in April. The District reeled back and took firm hold on itself on the 19th of March which date marked the formal appearance of one Milton Harris. Horace Graber followed Milton by one day into the District. S. A. Graves, a Senior Clerk, came to work in the accounting room in May. Wendell H. Ammon was put to work in the drafting room having transferred from Headquarters Office. R. H. Barnwell was hired in April. Earle W. Taylor was transferred to Fresno.

A major acquisition to the District's forces occurred in January of 1934 when A. P. McCarton first came onto the District's payroll. Elmer L. Smith, a Junior Highway Engineer, was hired and Robert B. River, a Senior Aid was laid off. Janice Wald was hired as an Intermediate Account Clerk in the District Office. An Intermediate Stenographer Clerk by name of C. Genevieve Muldoon came to work in March and over a period of fifteen years she provided colorful action in the office before she eventually retired for disability.

Lillian Bradley completed her four and one half months of service as a steno in February of 1934.

The Right of Way Department practically became a department in 1934. When Mr. Woodson was promoted to more responsible right of way in San Francisco it took two men to fill his position. In February Serge Ray was transferred into the District and into right of way work as well. Coming from District V after several years of drafting room work previously in District III in Sacramento, Serge was assigned to the office end of right of way work. Serge's background is slightly different than most of District IX's personnel. He came to California from Russia in 1925 on an immigration quota. He was educated on a higher scale than most Russians of his time and had long experience in railroad survey work in Siberia. In the United States he completed his formal education by graduating in 1929 from the University of California at Berkeley in Civil Engineering.

The field and negotiating end of the Right of Way Department was handled by Francis R. Baker who transferred into the District from San Diego. Francis was an Associate Highway Engineer with years of experience throughout the State as a resident engineer on highway contracts. Between Baker and Ray the problems centering around right of way acquisition became as putty in their hands.

One of the new secondary routes added to the District's mileage in 1933 was Route 127 which began at the Tulare County line and was completely unbuilt for 15 miles as it descended the eastern slope of the Sierras back of Lone Pine. Connecting with the earth road built by the County it switchbacked its way down the slope to Carroll Creek and then took off cross country northerly where it found a low pass through the historic and aged Alabama Hills and then emerging almost at once into the town of Lone Pine. Since traffic on this road which goes nowhere is and has been almost negligible no major work has been done on it. State forces have oiled and maintained it so from Lone Pine to Carroll Creek. No work beyond Carroll Creek has been done by the State since this portion is primarily a road for the pack trains.

Easterly from a point on Route 23 about two miles south of Lone Pine, Route 127 crosses the Owens River and follows along the north and east shores of Owens Lake past Keeler and on to Darwin, Panamint Springs, and up over Towne's Pass and down Emigrant Canyon into Death Valley. In the valley Route 127 goes by Stove Pipe Wells Hotel, past the Devil's Cornfield, Furnace Creek Ranch and leaves the Monument by way of Furnace Creek Canyon. At Death Valley Junction Route 127 turns south past Shoshone and ends at Ibex Pass insofar as District IX is concerned. In District VIII Route 127 terminates at Baker on the Barstow-Las Vegas highway.

None of this route was oiled and very little of it was graded to any acceptable standard. It did, however, offer the best means of entrance into Death Valley. While this route was adopted as a State highway, a portion of it existed as a toll road and unless an alternate route was located and built the State had the toll company with which to contend. The Eichbaum Toll Road was over Towne's Pass at an elevation of 5000 feet and reconnaissance developed no other alternate route. Negotiations then proceeded to purchase this toll road in order to provide a free State highway. A final price of \$25,000 for the road was eventually negotiated. The down payment of \$6,100 was paid on December 17, 1934 at which time evidence of a satisfactory title to the State was given. The final payment of \$18,900 was made by the State on June 29, 1935.

The Eichbaum Toll Road was built by H. W. Eichbaum who early saw the possibilities of heavy tourist travel to Death Valley. A mining promoter, he was a native of Pennsylvania and had his claim in the Panamint Mountains. He spent his small fortune in building the toll road and in building the famous Stove Pipe Wells Hotel. He was a vigorous advertiser and promoter of the attractions in Death Valley and it was regretted by all of those who knew him that he died of spinal meningitis in February of 1932 at the age of 49 and thus did not live to witness the rapid development of the area in which he pioneered.



*Eichbaum
Toll
Road*





*Death
Valley*



*Furnace
Creek Inn*

December 22, 1934 marked the taking over of the Eichbaum Toll Road and the elimination of the tolls, a fact greatly desired and appreciated by the motorists.

Death Valley National Monument was created February 11, 1933 by proclamation of President Herbert Hoover. Road wise this monument is distinctive in that it had a greater mileage of roads than any other national park or monument.

The existing roads through the monument easterly of Eichbaum's toll road were free public roads and with the purchase of Eichbaum's road there were no tolls at all in this area. To keep faith with the traveling public the State has since then maintained this road as a toll free State highway even though the road lies within the Monument boundaries. No specific right of way lines exist because of the fact that both the Highway and the Monument are public bodies. Should the State desire to relocate portions of its highway within the Monument then such new location would be subject to approval by the Monument authorities.

In any event the two governmental agencies have always gotten along harmoniously. T. Ray Goodwin, an ex-State highway resident engineer, has been the Superintendent of the Monument from the date of its origin. Possibly Ray's early State highway training is responsible for the harmonious relationship which has existed over the years.

California was saddened in May of 1934 by the death of "Sunny Jim" Rolph, Governor of California for nearly three and one half years. Frank Merriam took over the affairs of the State and was politically successful in being elected Governor in November in his own right. Earl Lee Kelly was retained as Director of Public Works and Charles H. Purcell continued on as State Highway Engineer.

START OF WORK ON THE SECONDARIES

Three more construction projects on Route 23 were put under contract in 1935 before the first of the numerous contracts were awarded to bring the secondary highways up to a travelable standard.

Tiffany Construction Company picked off two of the projects albeit both were relatively small contracts they were important ones from the standpoint of filling in sub-standard sections.

The 0.9 mile from 1.8 to 0.9 miles south of Fish Springs School cost \$13,179 for salvaging the old surfacing and combining it with new material to provide a wider and thicker surfacint. A. P. McCarton was the resident engineer and received help from Merle Ellis, Paul Evans and George Ullom.

Tiffany Construction Company also regraded and oil surfaced a 0.7 mile section of Route 23 just south of the Inyo-Mono County Line at a cost of \$14,187. McCarton was also the resident engineer and he brought with him the same set of assistants that he had on the Fish Springs School job.

The third project during 1935 on Route 23 was in Mono County from 1 mile north of the Bodie Road to Point Ranch which went to the Kennedy Construction Company. This project cost \$38,633 and was for grading and placing selected material on 2.1 miles of highway. A. P. McCarton moved his crew up from the Bishop area for this project except that Paul Evans got left behind for other duties.

After more than two years of planning, surveys and overcoming financial difficulties, Spence Lowden celebrated the formal start of work on the 1933 secondary highways. This start was signalized by the award on September 23, 1935 to Basich Brothers for a 4.93 miles grading contract on new Route 145 north of Randsburg between 2 miles southwest of Searles and Rademacher. The cost of \$8,206. Al Briney was the resident on this memorable project, ably aided by George Ullom, S. H. Allen and D. L. Price.

For the first time in District IX's history a formal contract was done on any highway other than Route 23. From then on the award of highway contracts in District IX came on at almost flood stage. Not all of the projects of these times were involved with the fortunes of the secondaries but they received the bulk of the feverish attention of the times. Four more contracts were let on the secondary highway system before the year 1935 faded from the scene.

As a major project in transforming the desert gravels to smooth riding pavements a contract involving 54 miles of 20' road mixed surface treatment was awarded to Clyde A. Wood Construction Company. For \$61,303 the contractor roadmixed 1 to 1-1/4 gallons of liquid asphalt SC2 with the native material to provide 12 miles of smooth riding pavement from Panamint Springs easterly to the Death Valley National Monument and 42 miles from Death Valley Junction to Ibex Pass. There are few other places in the State where road mix operations such as this could be performed during a November and December. Merle Ellis aided by George Ullom looked after the State's interests on this project.

A similar type of project was done on Route 145 wherein the A. S. Vinnell Company undertook to roadmix 29.26 miles from the San Bernardino County line at Johannesburg to Route 23 near the Inyo County line. This pavement was mixed 18' wide and cost \$25,651. Al Briney was the resident engineer assisted by D. L. Price and George Ullom. George Ullom was fast gaining a reputation similar to that of Paul Evans of being present on most every contract.

Basich Brothers were also the low bidder on the grading of Route 128 for its entire length of 7.2 miles from Death Valley Junction to the Nevada State Line for which they were paid \$9,650. Merle Ellis took on the residency of this job upon the completion of his 54 miles surfacing contract assisted by the ever present George Ullom.

The oiling of the existing road from Stove Pipe Wells to the easterly Monument boundary was brought into being by a rather unique procedure. The State of California contributed the sum of \$20,000 for the purchase of liquid asphalt and the application of the asphalt, together with the placing of the roadside cover material, was done by boys of the Civilian Conservation Corps under the direct supervision of Monument Superintendent Ray Goodwin.

Ray Goodwin was also able to get an oil surface on a goodly percentage of the park roads utilizing this same C.C.C. crew.

The last of the 1935 jobs was also the first of the jobs on Route 76 now U.S. 6. This was for grading the roadbed from 1.8 miles north of Bishop to 1.4 miles north of Laws, a distance of 2.6 miles. As was fast becoming a custom for small grading projects the low bidder turned out to be Basich Brothers. This project cost \$17,861. Al Briney with help from Merle Ellis George Ullom and R. H. Barnwell handled the inspection for the State.

In addition to all of this construction activity survey parties and drafting room squads were equally busy in keeping ahead so that the work could be intelligently carried out. The most spectacular of the surveys was the completely new alignment on the Death Valley road which took the highway away from the historic mining town of Darwin and especially removed the highway from the treacherous Darwin Wash. Beginning at a point on the mesa land northwest of Darwin this route dropped rapidly to the Panamint Sink at Panamint Springs in a distance of somewhat over twelve miles.

Maintenance operations in 1935 generally followed the pattern of previous years. Snow removal and sanding of icy pavements in the winter seasons, ciling, patching, grading shoulders, repairing damages from summer desert cloudbursts, dragging and shaping up the new secondary roads and in general filling in where ever day labor work was needed.

Foreman John Van Dyck at Conway Summit was involved in a serious accident while plowing snow on January 9, 1935. The operator of the push plow had dropped into the Conway cookhouse for breakfast. In order to insure no break in the snow removal operations John took the plow, together with swamper Pappas, and started south through the blizzard in an attempt to make a round trip while the driver finished his breakfast. During the blizzard John drove off the grade about 500' south of the summit. About the second revolution of the truck Pappas was thrown out of the truck. Van Dyck was carried on down with the truck. Rescuers had to contend with a badly hurt back on Pappas and with severe cuts and bruises on Van Dyck, especially where his leg was pinched between the truck and a rock.

On April 30, 1935 Preston L. Fite severed his connections of nearly six years as Maintenance Engineer. It was during these years that the Maintenance Department came of age in a manner of speaking. The three maintenance superintendents' territories had been established and stabilized. The various foremen's areas had been settled upon and the transition from tent camps to permanent foremen's headquarters had been made. Snow removal operations had been established as a regular and permanent maintenance function. All in all the maintenance structure as we know it today was instigated and put into regular operation procedure by Pres Fite. It was with real regret that the District let him go to bigger responsibilities in District X, Stockton.

Fite's successor was Clarence Cleman. Cleman came from District III at Marysville where he had been construction engineer for several years. Physically a large man it was quite a surprise to his many associates to find a man so quiet of speech! His voice was exceedingly soft and he spoke only when there was something to say. He took over his duties with his quiet enthusiasm and ~~proceeded to capably~~ handle his assignment.

June 20 of 1935 was the official opening of Tioga Pass and this event again occurred without the previous pomp and ceremony.

This year marked the formal designation of the Federal Routes symbolized by the placing of the U.S. official route markers along the highway. The three U.S. routes in the District limits are U.S. 6 from Los Angeles County line to Bishop and to the Nevada State line via Benton Station; U.S. 395 from the San Bernardino County line near Johannesburg to the Nevada State line via Inyokern, Bishop, Bridgeport and Coleville; and U.S. 466 from near Tehachapi via Mojave to the San Bernardino County line at Boron. The markers were installed by the field sign forces of the Automobile Club of Southern California.

The newspapers of this year were full of the publicity and activities of the Three Flags Highway Association in their endeavors to attract ever increasing numbers of tourists to the area through which this highway travels. G. W. Dow of Lone Pine was re-elected to the post of president of the association at its annual convention in Reno.

October 17, 1935 was the birthday of another memorable civic organization - the Inyo Associates. A county wide group of civic minded individuals this organization was originally conceived and promoted by Ralph Merritt, a mining promotor, E. Ray Goodwin, Superintendent of Death Valley National Monument and Father John J. Crowley a Catholic priest but universally beloved of all faiths in the valley. While these three are generally given credit for conceiving the Inyo Associates five other extremely active and important Inyoites were in on the actual formation of the Associates. They were Art Hess, Roy Boothe, Bob Crosby, G. W. Dow and Joe Riley. Hess, Boothe and Crosby are active participants in the group with Roy Boothe being designated as a life member, the only Associate so honored. By reason of his job Spence Lowden became officially a member of the Inyo Associates. This group had no funds except for stamps and carried out the mandates from its monthly meetings by word of mouth or via the U.S. mail. In its original purpose the Associates sought to better relations between the City of Los Angeles and the citizens of Owens Valley. Its second major objective was the development of the State highway system and the Forest roads and trails.

The State of Nevada completed its new highway over Mt. Montgomery and so great was this event heralded that a celebration and formal dedication were held on October 6, 1935. This colorful event can best be described by quoting again from the Inyo Register:

"Severing bands of gold and silver ribbon typifying the mineral products for which the two States are most famed, State Controller Henry C. Schmidt of Nevada declared Montgomery Pass connection between his State and California opened and dedicated to the service of the traveling public. This detail Sunday at the summit of the pass concluded a program witnessed by possibly 150 visitors from the two states. The ribbons which barred the way were held by two pretty misses, and that 'pretty' is not merely a polite expression - Miss Dorothy Birdsong of Lone Pine and Miss Isabel Maismith of Tonopah were costumed to represent her state. Ex-Senator Joe Riley acted as master of ceremonies, also as representative of Governor Merriam. Mr. Schmidt, also spokesman for Governor Kirman of Nevada. Brief talks made by G. W. Dow - history of activity toward road; E. C. Brown of U. S. Bureau of Public Roads - cooperation with states; Division Engineer S. W. Lowden outlined future plans for routing; W. A. Crosby spoke as the accredited representative of the Southern California Automobile Club; W. M. Daod of Reno Chamber of Commerce; and Nevada Automobile Association expressed congratulations; Forrest Lovelock of Tonopah told of national park-to-park highway, part of the longest transcontinental route."

The 1935 legislature took away another 1/4¢ of the gasoline tax and applied the funds thus raised to the construction and maintenance of major streets other than State highways within the area of the various incorporated cities throughout the state.

By legislation enacted at this same session the State took over the collection of the personal property taxes on automotive equipment. The funds raised from this collection were termed the "in lieu tax" and were distributed on the basis of 25% to the cities, 12-1/2% to the counties and the balance was allocated to the retirement of the three original State highway bond issues.

George McIvor, the Superintendent at Crestview, came upon evil days in his health problems, probably accentuated by the high altitude of Mono County. He took a leave of absence for health reasons in November. In consequence of his being unable to acclimate his health to the region a transfer was arranged for McIvor back to District X at Stockton from whence he came. Superintendent Joe Lemos was moved from his special assignment location at Bishop to Crestview in charge of that area as Maintenance Superintendent.

Ellsworth L. Talmon came to the District Office from District X at Stockton to work in the drafting room as a draftsman and delineator.

Donald L. Price, a Senior Engineering Aid in District V at San Luis Obispo came ~~into the~~ District as an engineering inspector in November of 1935.

Sam Ringold from Fresno came to the Bishop drafting room on a transfer in August of this year. S. H. Allen was added to the field inspection forces in October. Walter Scrochi picked up his drafting tools in April and carried them with him to Los Angeles whence his services were transferred.

The District's messenger, mail clerk and all around helper since November 1, 1932 was Maxwell L. Sirick. On June 1, 1935 he left his post to go to work for one of the News Services. His place was taken by a member of Owens Valley's long time families, Ralph Temperly. The job as Junior Messenger was too minor for Ralph, however, and it wasn't long before he was promoted to be an Intermediate Clerk. His employment with the District came to an end in March of 1936. Ralph is now an accountant with an office of his own in Lone Pine and carries on the duties as Secretary of the Lone Pine Chamber of Commerce as a sideline.

MOST CONTRACTS

From the standpoint of the number of contracts awarded the year 1936 was the winner going away. A total of twenty one formal highway contracts was awarded in this year and represents the peak year in getting the secondary highways into the all-weather category. Nine contracts were let for continuing work on the main line Route 23. Two contracts were for oiling on Route 63; Route 40 had one similar contract also. Two contracts were let on Route 76 and one on Route 96. Four contracts on Route 127, one on Route 123 and one on Route 145 completed the total of twenty one.

The main line contracts all were for the purpose of bringing up to current standards stretches of highways previously built or surfaced to lower standards.

Basich Brothers built a 2.3 mile portion from 4.0 to 1.7 miles south of Big Pine for \$44,917 and had Merle Ellis with help from Paul Evans, R. V. Murray, Al Simmons and D. L. Price as inspectors.

The relocation of the road from Big Pine to Keoughs Hot Springs substituted one tangent for the old curving alignment. Basich Brothers were also the contractors on this 7.3 miles grading and bituminous treated rock surfacing contract. It cost \$110,282 and had Al Briney as resident engineer, assisted by Merle Ellis, H. F. Graber, J. P. Adams, D. J. Bouch, D. L. Price and George Ullom.

Isbell Construction Company of Reno picked off one of the largest ever of District IX's contracts when it was paid \$224,148 for the grading and bituminous treated selected material surfacing of the 7.6 miles north slope approach to the 8100' Conway Summit. Joe Stanley was the resident engineer on this notable improvement to the Mono County portion of the State highway system. Inspectors on this project were O. R. Westlund, Ken Peirce, Herb O'Donnell, Bob Roberts, A. M. Chamberlin, Sid Silver, E. King, C. A. Pavelko, R. H. F. Boothe, J. Paller, Don Price, C. W. Thompson and W. M. Chamberlin.

A bituminous treated rock surfacing was placed over the old surfacing for 9.1 miles beginning three miles north of Mojave and ending twelve miles north of Mojave under an \$18,025 contract to A. S. Vinnell Company. This 20' road mixed surfacing also included a seal coat. Cass M. Rose handled all phases of this job for the State without assistance.

A. S. Vinnell Co. of Los Angeles also bid low for 0.92 mile of imported borrow and road mixed surfacing at two locations between Little Lake and Cartago. For this work the State paid Vinnell \$10,020. Merle Ellis aided by Don Price represented the State.

Indicative of the fact that constant work must be done upon the highways in an effort to stay abreast of traffic needs was shown by the necessity for the work done by contract to Oswald Brothers of Los Angeles between 1.2 miles north of Lone Pine to Big Pine. Over portions totaling 13.64 miles a blanket course of plant mixed surfacing one inch thick was placed. Shoulders were built up to grade and oiled to a width of 6' on each side of the central paved area of 20'. The State paid \$67,281 for this work and assigned Merle Ellis as resident engineer and Paul Evans, George Ullom, Don Price, Francis Noel, Deane Bowers and R. V. Murray as assistants.

Al Simmons was in charge of the contract let to Basich Brothers for grading and road mix surfacing of the 1.74 miles reconstruction just south of the Inyo-Mono County line. The only aid he received was what spare time help Merle Ellis could grant him. Basich Brothers received \$20,255 for this project.

Once established in this area Basich Brothers were hard to under bid. They set their minds to getting a major project in obtaining the 9.12 miles grading and surfacing project from 2 miles south of Rush Creek to 2 miles north of Leevining for which they were paid \$113,923. Al Briney was the resident engineer assisted by George Ullom, H. F. Graber, Francis Noel, D. J. Bouch, Don Price and Merle Ellis.

Forty six and sixty five hundredths miles of Mono County roads were treated to a cutback seal coat covered with sand at three locations from Convict Creek to Antelope Valley under a contract which resulted in a payment of \$26,393 to the A. S. Vinnell Company. A. P. McCarton was the resident engineer.

The Regal Oil Company was the recipient of three contracts for furnishing and spreading liquid asphalt upon the traveled way. This procedure was the method adopted to getting an all weather surface in a hurry to those secondary roads whose alignment and grade were deemed good enough as is for the relatively light traffic encountered. The State forces would shape up the roadbed to the desired cross section ahead of the oil contractor. The liquid asphalt thus applied was allowed to penetrate into the subgrade as long as possible during the day. State forces then would blade, sweep or hand cast local roadside material on the fresh oil to take up the pools and to act as a blotter so that the traffic would not splatter any excess oil on their cars. In this manner many miles of roads could be dust oiled economically and speedily.

In this manner Regal Oil Company was paid \$1382 for six miles of penetration work on the road easterly from the Yosemite National Park Boundary over Tioga Pass. Liquid

asphalt SC2 was spread at the rate of $3/4$ gallon per square yard over a 14' width. Joe Lemos was the Superintendent for the State with Foreman Roy (Pop) Wells in direct charge of the work.

Two such contracts on the Westgard Pass road were awarded to the Regal Oil Company covering some 27 miles from the east end of Cedar Flat to the Nevada State line. In this case the road was oiled only 12' wide and at a rate of $1/2$ gallon per square yard using liquid asphalt SC2. Dwight Wonacott was in charge of the work for the State.

Dwight was also in charge of similar work between 1.3 miles north of Bishop and 1.4 miles north of Laws which totaled 2.6 miles. The Square Oil Company was the contractor for furnishing the liquid asphalt SC2 which was spread 20' wide and at the rate of one gallon per square yard. In this case the one gallon per square yard allowed for a light road mix surfacing.

Up Benton way a contract was awarded to Basich Brothers for grading 1.76 miles of road involving the fixing up of the road at three railroad crossings. The Mina Branch of the C.P.R.R. crossed the highway at Chalfant, Hammil and south of Benton. Conditions affecting highway traffic at these three crossings were so unsatisfactory, even though there were only two trains a week, that the \$11,985 spent for this project was considered entirely justified. Al Simmons was the resident engineer and sole inspector on this project.

C. A. Baker was the contractor for grading 2.4 miles of the Sweetwater road northeasterly from Bridgeport. This cost the State \$10,095. Cass Rose was the resident engineer.

State Route 127 from near Lone Pine easterly toward Death Valley National Monument received the attention of four highway contracts during 1936.

The first of these contracts was for the grading of a 24' roadbed from 8.0 miles southeast of Keeler to Centennial Wash. Young & Son Company contracted for this 1.3 mile section for which they were paid \$13,472. Joe Stanley was the resident engineer.

The Square Oil Company under a \$2,466 contract supplied the liquid asphalt SC2 for prime coat and SC4 for mixing of a 20' section totaling 1.83 miles from eight to ten miles south of Keeler. State forces did the mixing under Dwight Wonacott's supervision.

The Peninsula Paving Company under a \$172,396 contract undertook the grading of the 17.6 miles relocation from 3-1/2 miles east of the Saline Valley Road to Panamint Sink. This



*DARWIN to
PANAMINT ROAD
ZINC HILL*





*DARWIN to PANAMINT ROAD
ZINC HILL*



project was completely away from the old road via Darwin, Darwin Falls and which wound up following the bed of the shifting Darwin Wash. Al Briney, as was usually the case involving major construction, was assigned as the resident engineer. His assistants were Francis Noel, W. H. Ammon, George Ullom and A. E. Lamb.

Basich Brothers contracted to grade a roadbed 24' wide and to place a 20' road mixed surfacing thereon for 2 miles east of Lone Pine and one mile east of the Owens River. This job cost \$23,494 and included a timber bridge over the Owens River. W. H. Ammon was the resident engineer with occasional help from Don Price.

The full 7.27 miles length of Route 128 from Death Valley Junction to the Nevada State line were road mixed 18' wide using 1-1/4 gallons of liquid asphalt SC4 per square yard under a \$8,349 contract awarded to C. W. Wood. A. P. McCarton was the State's only representative.

Five miles of U.S. 395 from 2 miles southwest of Searles to Rademacher were roadmixed 18' wide under a contract awarded to Oilfields Trucking Company of Bakersfield. This job cost \$5,275 and was also done under the inquisitive eye of A. P. McCarton. Road mixing in February would scarcely be attempted at any other than desert localities similar to this one.

These twenty one contracts cost the gasoline users of the State of California approximately \$900,000 and represented the largest amount of money ever allocated to the land east of the Sierras in any one calendar year since the State started in the business of building highways.

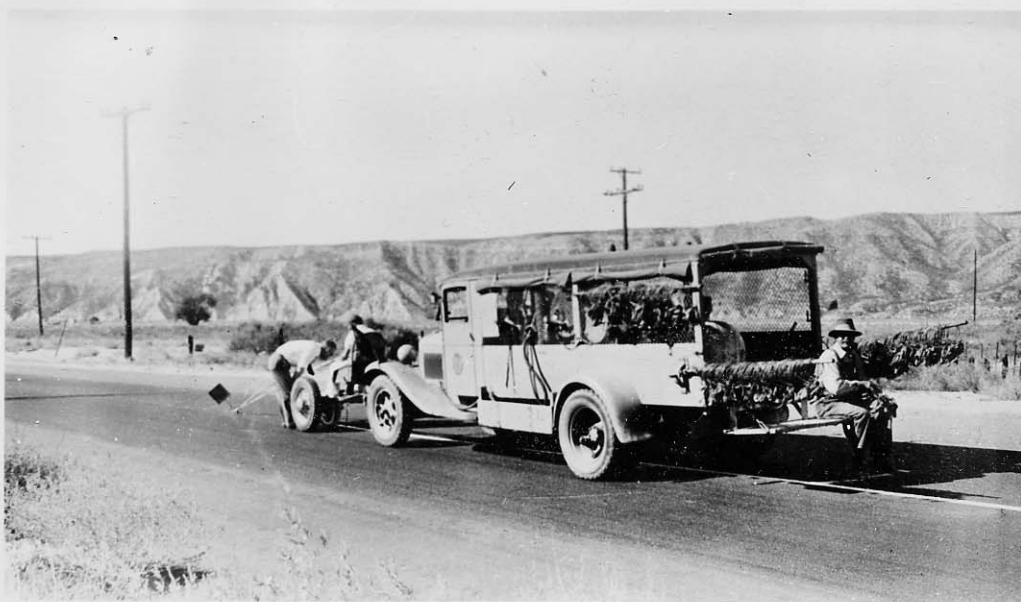
The frequency with which names appear as being associated with the various projects would indicate that the projects were either of very short duration or that the personnel spent but a short time on each project. These assumptions would be essentially correct. Certain personnel were well skilled in certain highway functions and thus spent time on the various projects only while these functions were in progress. The smaller jobs offered possibilities of residents and assistants to move directly from one job to another.

New personnel coming into the Inyo-Mono area during 1936 included: Forest E. Norton, Senior Engineering Aid, from the Bridge Department; Alfred T. Moore (Steve), Assistant Highway Engineer from the Marysville District; Cass M. Rose, Associate Highway Engineer and A. M. Chamberlin, Junior Highway Engineer.

W. D. Hege, Junior Engineering Office Aid from the Fresno Highway District; ~~Louis E. Steele~~, Junior Highway Engineer



*Traffic Striping Equipment
Mid Thirties*



from Los Angeles District and O. R. Westlund, Assistant Highway Engineer from the Bridge Department at Sacramento completed the list of engineers transferred into the Bishop area during this year. Robert V. Phillips was put on the payroll as a Junior Engineering Office Aid.

In the District Office Doris Myers, an Intermediate Account Clerk, came to work as did Kathryn Morrison. Kate, however, did not last out the year. Zorena W. Farnam started operating the bookkeeping machine in August. June saw the employment of Newton Evers as a Junior Messenger replacing Ralph Temperly.

Audrey Symons came to work in September as a Junior Stenographer Clerk. Eldred R. Kelley went to work in the accounting room as an Intermediate Clerk presumably to fill the vacancy left by the transfer of Janice Wald to Shop 3 at Marysville.

Pearl Hannon changed her name to Pearl Satterlee and left town with her new husband after nearly three years as a Senior Stenographer Clerk in the office. Pearl had formerly been Spence's stenographer in Redding.

Four engineering employees left the District for various reasons mostly of their own making. S. H. Allen transferred to the San Diego District in December. R. H. Barnwell transferred in May to Headquarters Office at Sacramento. Associate Highway Engineer Guy McKinney arranged a transfer of his services to the metropolitan area of San Francisco thus terminating four years of services in this District.

The biggest blow to the office was the transfer of Harold M. Hansen to the coastal fog of the Eureka area. Harold came to Bishop in April of 1923 and served as resident engineer on several contracts.

After E. K. Guion's separation from the service Harold was given the position of District Office Engineer. Eight years in the District had given Harold a quasi status as a veteran and it was with real regret that his co-workers witnessed the closing out of his tenure of office.

Effervescent Milton Harris was assigned to the desk left vacant by Harold's departure. Sabina Collins was assigned to the secretaryship of Milton as well as to Spence Lowden and it wasn't long until the glances passed between Sabina and Milton became more than passing glances. This office romance developed and blossomed to the logical conclusion of Collins becoming Harris.

Tioga Pass was reported open on June 19th.

The maintenance department instigated parallel parking on the rural State highways in Lone Pine, Independence and Big Pine in accordance with the legal requirements but this method of parking was not popular with the hardy Owens Valleyites.

Either because of the scarcity of jack rabbits or for other equally obscure reasons the vicious habit of shooting at highway signs became so pronounced that a count of the damaged signs was made and 78% of the signs erected to date found so depredated. Thoughtless and malicious shooting at State highway signs has cost the State many thousands of dollars and caused untold inconveniences to the traveling motorists.

Shop 9 changed foremen in 1936 with Ralph Hildebrand relinquishing the job in favor of L.E. Bramhall. At this time the inventory value of the equipment under the control of the Shop was \$226,533.70.

WEDDING OF THE WATERS

Following the crest of 1936's peak of construction activities the year 1937 tried hard to keep up with its predecessor but the big bulk of the work had been contracted for and the best that Spence Lowden was able to promote was a total of nine contracts for 1937. Only one of these nine was on the main line, the balance being promoted for the continuing program of bringing the secondary highways up to the standard expected of them by the public.

On Route 23 a contract was let to S. A. Cummings for grading and placing plant mixed surfacing for the 0.7 mile of the business area of the town of Mojave. This provided a full street section in the town which was divided off into four traffic lanes and two parking areas. The cost of this work was \$27,278 with Merle Ellis acting as resident engineer, assisted by Lloyd Bradley, George Ullom, Jack Paller, Don Price and W. C. Names.

Between Bishop and the Owens River a contract was awarded to Basich Brothers for the grading and roadmixed surfacing of a 2.2 mile stretch of the Bishop to Benton, State highway, U.S. 6. This contract included the reinforced concrete bridge over Bishop Creek. Basich Brothers were paid the sum of \$29,295 for their efforts under this contract. Ray Raley was resident engineer on the road work and J. E. Bonadiman was resident engineer on the bridge portion. A. D. Auger assisted both men as needed.

The start of highway construction into June Lake started in 1937 with the award of a contract to J. V. Galbraith and Don A. Canevari for grading a 2.2 mile section from Route 23 at June Lake Junction westerly to the area of Boulder Camp. For \$17,948 this section was graded. The surface oiling was later performed by State forces. Howard Caton was the resident engineer on the contract assisted by Paul Evans, A. D. Auger and Ken Peirce.

Oswald Brothers were the low bidders on the grading and road mix surfacing contract for the full 9 mile stretch of the Mammoth Lakes road, Route 112. Fast work on the part of the contractor enabled him to complete this \$44,411 project in about 2-1/2 months total time. Fred Pracht aided by W. C. Names, D. J. Bouch, Ken Peirce and Jack Paller represented the State.

Late in the year two projects were put underway on the Lone Pine to Death Valley route which helped the motorist along his way. The steep 2.9 mile portion at the top of Towne's Pass on the westerly slope of the Panamint Mountains was regarded to somewhat alleviate but not to entirely relieve the steepness. Silva & Hill Construction Company did the grading plus the application of a penetration oil treatment for the sum of \$33,590.

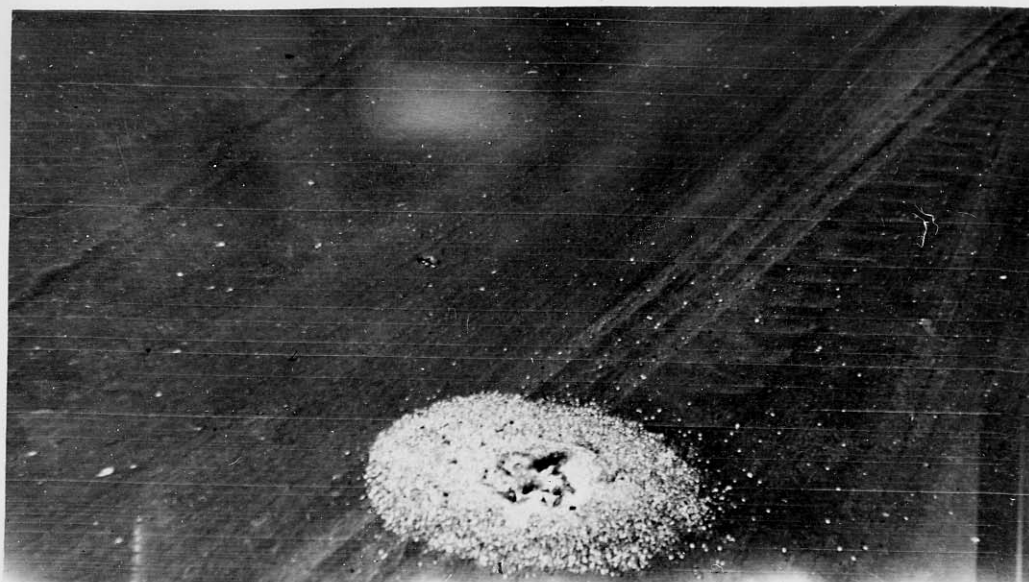
Howard Caton handled this project as resident engineer without any other engineering assistance.

The other project was for the placing of a penetration oil treatment 20' wide from one mile east of the Saline Valley Road over a distance of 20.5 miles to Panamint Sink. Liquid asphalt SC4 and SC2 was applied to the roadbed at the rate of from 1/2 to 3/4 gallon per square yard. While a light penetration treatment was placed over the Darwin bypass project under the Peninsula Paving Company contract this project also added additional liquid asphalt to the original oil thus adding to the thickness of the oil cake. Paulson & March, Inc. were the contractors and were paid \$11,316 for furnishing and applying the liquid asphalt. R. V. Murray was the resident engineer with Donald Price and Francis Noel assigned as helpers.

Trouble developed on the 1936 road mixed project from Death Valley Junction to the Nevada State line shortly after the work under the Clyde W. Wood contract was completed. Laboratory tests of the material were taken and analyzed with the resultant conclusion that the local material used as mineral aggregate contained too many fine particles and also that it contained too large a percentage of alkali. State forces then added additional selected material which contained no alkali and was considerably coarser grained. Under a \$12,785 contract to J. A. Casson this 7.27 mile section was remixed 18' wide but with a heavier type asphalt than the original liquid asphalt SC2. Liquid asphalt SC4 was used this time and the analysis and treatment must have been correct as this piece of road has never given trouble since that date. Kenneth Peirce was the resident engineer and needed no other assistance.

Two projects on U.S. 395 in eastern Kern County rounded out 1937's contribution to the contract construction program in District IX. Basich Brothers were the successful bidders on both of these projects. Chronologically the first project was for the grading and road mixed surfacing near Inyokern for a distance of 0.5 mile and costing the State \$5,305. Ralph V. Murray was the resident engineer on this job aided by E. R. Brown and George Ullom.

Ralph Murray was also the resident engineer on Basich Brothers' other contract. Paul Evans and E. R. Bryan helped Ralph on the 2.8 mile contract which extended from 1.2 miles southeast of Rademacher to 1.7 miles northwest of Rademacher. This grading and road mixed surfacing cost the State \$15,303. A unique happenstance occurred on this project about eleven days after the surfacing was completed. At that time a series of craters were observed on the pavement; as many as 25 per mile were counted. Close inspection revealed these craters to be ant hills. The ants were working their way down into and below the surfacing. Thus for the first time in history Kellogg's Ant Paste became a legitimate highway construction material. In ten days using this paste the ant menace to the highway industry was at an end.



*Operation Anthills
Near Rademacher
on State Route 145*



Meanwhile the historic relocation of the Death Valley highway away from Darwin and ending near Panamint Springs was progressing to a successful conclusion by the Peninsula Paving Company. This major project was so changing the highway map of Inyo County that the/citizens of the area felt that a celebration and dedication were in order. Meeting at Furnace Creek Ranch in April of 1937 a prominent group of Owens Valley and Death Valley personages laid plans for a proposed Death Valley-Mt. Whitney highway celebration.

Present were John J. Crowley, acting chairman; George W. Savage, W. A. Reid, T. R. Goodwin, Dane Coolidge, W. A. Chalfant, Alex C. Krater, E. T. Albright, Ralph P. Merritt, Joe Riley, H. P. Gower, John C. Beebe, Roy Boothe, James C. Irvine, Isaac C. Bays, Chester O. Best and W. A. Crosby. Father Crowley proposed a celebration to open the new highway, to be held about the middle of October. He suggested a program calling for bringing of water from the highest lake on continental United States to the lowest water in the continent, from Lake Tulainyo down to Bad Water in Death Valley via the various old and modern modes of transportation. Indian runner from Lake Tulainyo down to near Whitney Portal, thence by burro to the Portal, by horseback from the Portal to Lone Pine, thence by stage coach and 20 mule team to Southern Pacific crossing north of Keeler, by narrow gauge to Keeler, thence by automobile to the Panamint Valley and by plane to Death Valley dropping the water into Bad Water. In other words the "wedding of the waters."

Mr. Lowden informed the group that the highway project would be completed late in the fall. The dates of October 29, 30, and 31, 1937 were finally set as the official Mt. Whitney-Death Valley Celebration with the community of Lone Pine acting as the host town for the event. Interest in the celebration mounted during the summer and fall and extensive preparations were made to see that proper hospitality was provided and that the many events planned went off as planned and on the schedule proposed.

Governor Frank Merriam accepted a special invitation to attend and advised that several high State officials would accompany him to the event. A special dedication stamp representing an old time ox yoke served to link together a view of Mt. Whitney and of Death Valley. This stamp was designed by Charles Owens of the Los Angeles Times. Lone Pine merchants distributed these stamps for free to all outgoing mail in Lone Pine during the three day celebration.

Father Crowley as dedication chairman expended his tireless energy in this capacity as only he could do. A program worked out by Father Crowley was so timed as to show minute by minute each stage in the dedication.

As the scheduled date drew near frantic efforts were made by the highway contractors to have the road ready for the dedication. It was necessary for Spence Lowden to continually advise the celebration committee that the road would be ready for the affair and then to hurry over and prod the contractor along.

The throng of people who descended upon Lone Pine that last week end in October was the largest assemblage of people ever gathered in Lone Pine for any other occasion. Most prominent of the visiting guests was the Governor of the State of California, Frank Merriam and his wife.

The celebration started on Friday October 29, 1937 high on the slopes of Mt. Whitney at Lake Tulainyo. From its icy depths a gourd full of its waters was taken by an Indian runner, Jerry Emm. Jerry was an athlete from the Stewart Institute in Nevada and the gourd was furnished by a nameless enthusiast from Los Angeles. Jerry carried the gourd of water down the rugged mountain slopes to Whitney Portal from whence a team of pony express riders, first Russell Spainhower, next Ted Cook and finally Bert Johnson carried the gourd and its water on into Lone Pine. Movie star Bill Boyd received the gourd from Bert Johnson and delivered it to Russell Wylie of the Lone Pine Branch Bank of America into whose vault it rested during the night. From Whitney Portal easterly down the slope of the mountain and through the Alabama hills the many cars following the pony express riders in the gathering dusk made an impressive "cascade of light" to the waiting multitude in the town.

A gigantic fish fry was held that evening with the Governor and his wife as guests of honor. Former Inyo County District Attorney and later Deputy Attorney General Jess Hession was master of ceremonies. Extra special applause was given for introductions to Mrs. Agnes Lindner, daughter of Melusa Bennett who at the age of two was with her parents during their tragic stay in Death Valley in 1849; to Henry Doty, son of Captain Doty of the Jayhawker Party; to Henry's sons Frank and Chester Doty and to Henry's grandson Sid Doty - three generations of lineal descendants and finally to Miss Josephine Breen, a descendant of the Donner Party,

Saturday morning the vault doors swung open and the gourd with its contents passed by hand to tiny Miss Patrina Johnson to Governor Merriam. Miss Patrina's grandfather A. H. Johnson was one of the very first white men to scale the summit of Mt. Whitney. Sam Bell, waiting with a pack burro, received the gourd from the Governor and struck out to deliver it to the next carrier, the covered wagon. In the covered wagon were Miss Breen and Mrs. Lindner, the three generations of Dotys and Joel Hale.



Lone Pine





Lone Pine



A short distance further on the covered wagon passed its cargo on to the custody of Johnny O'Keefe and his swamper Bill Bonham. Johnny and Bill were equipped with an old time borax wagon and water tank trailer specially rejuvenated for the occasion and powered with a genuine 20 mule team all supplied through the efforts of Mr. Jenifer of the Pacific Coast Borax Company.

Delivery was then made to the stage coach whose driver was protected on the coach seat by no less a guard than Governor Merriam himself. Armed with the identical rifle carried by Captain Doty as he led his Jayhawker party out of Death Valley, the pro tem messenger got his treasure safely through, no bandits appearing to dispute the trip.

At the narrow gauge railroad tracks the gourd was transferred to the train. Veteran engineer John Henry was at the throttle of old No. 14 which pulled three or four cars. The balance of the train crew was made up of Trainmaster Elliot, Fireman Ferguson and Brakeman Kelley and McAfee plus honorary Brakeman Jess Hession. The train trundled over the rails to the railhead at Keeler where it was enthusiastically greeted by the many celebrants who had gone ahead by motor caravan. By this time it was noon and everyone was hungry so they treked back to Lone Pine where a bounteous barbecue of beef, beans, relish, coffee and bread was served to the hungry throng.

After everyone had their hunger appeased a gigantic parade headed by the fifty piece uniformed band of the Los Angeles Police Department entertained the merrymakers. A partial list of the floats and parade entries included: The old covered wagon and its ox team; a stage coach, burros, packtrain, Ed Stevens' ancient gohicle, no doubt the oldest motorist conveyance now in the county; a little girl bearing a placard announcing her to be Katherine Sherwin, one of the first white children born in the county; an old-time horse and buggy laden with desert holly; a wagon representing the Inyo Writers Guild; the 20 mule team; Josephs in 1896 and in 1937; the costumed Singing Horsemen from Lancaster; Mt. Whitney Lodge, Knights of Pythias; Wapishone Trading Post; Halloween; Safeway Stores; an elaborate scenic float of Department of Water and Power; Lone Pine Lumber Company; Parent Teachers Association; Yesterday's School; the steamer Bessie Brady; Santa Rosa; Inyo Cafe; California State Employees Association and an Indian travois with the boss riding.

Following the elaborate parade those who desired a more violent brand of spectator sports took in a late afternoon rodeo. A mammoth outdoor show was given in the Lone Pine open air pavilion for the further entertainment of the populace.



MT. WHITNEY

BAD WATER



"Wedding of the Waters"

The carefully guarded Tulainyo water was picked up Sunday forenoon at Keeler by Louis Meyer, three times winner of the Indianapolis speed contest and in a Lincoln Zephyr it was moved on to the junction of the new road with the old, 6 miles north of Darwin. There a halt was made for the road dedication. A temporary telegraph station had been set up there by manager Willard Wade of the Interstate Telegraph Co. Arrangements had been made whereby President Franklin D. Roosevelt, at Hyde Park, New York, would press a key made of Comstock gold starting an impulse that traveled uninterruptedly over Western Union and Interstate Telegraph wires to the waste spot on top of the barren range bounding Panamint Valley on the west. A loud speaker was connected with the telegraph instruments over which George Terry of Independence presided. It is assumed that the tick came through as per schedule, at 11:30 Pacific time. Anyway on the instant two pistol experts of the Los Angeles police squad fired the shots that cut the ribbon held at either end by a young lady. Governor Merriam still held the historic rifle as the scene was pictured for news reels. The Los Angeles Police Band, with additions from the Indian Band, burst with the "Star Spangled Banner" followed by other music. Miss Josephine Breen, representing the Jayhawkers clasped hands while the cameras clicked. Ignacio Ruiz, long a Lone Piner, expressed in a few words of Spanish his enjoyment of the occasion. Father Crowley, as master of ceremonies, introduced successively Spence Lowden under whose direction the new road was built; Colonel John R. White, Superintendent of Death Valley National Monument; E. J. Neron of the higher officialdom of the Highway Department; Captain Kane whose CCC boys had worked on the farther end of the road; Frank A. Kittredge, Assistant Regional Director of the Park Service; Roy Boothe, Supervisor of Inyo National Forest. Each spoke briefly in congratulation and in greeting. Governor Merriam closed the speaking program in dedicating the new highway to the service of humanity. A large playa lake bed in Panamint Valley had been taken as an emergency landing field. There Pilot Warren E. Carey waited with a plane, and on receiving the gourd of water he took off over the top of Telescope Peak for Furnace Creek Inn, where more of the people awaited the final ceremonies.

Meantime many of the 80 or 100 cars at the Panamint scene had driven on across Townes Pass and stopped at Stove Pipe Wells. A barbecue had been prepared there and was expeditiously served. Some of the cavalcade of sightseers were lost at this point, the others going on down Death Valley to the finish at Bad Water. Pilot Carey, swooping over that pool poured the crystal water from the Sierras into the brackish lakelet below. The beacon on Dante's View blazed up; that on Telescope Peak caught the signal and shone a red star for a long period; Cerro Gordo Peak flamed no less conspicuously. The fire on Whitney where fuel was more of a problem was gone before those returning from Death Valley got within sight of it. Boy Scouts had been impressed into service at the beacons and at the summit of Whitney intrepid Norman Clyde touched off the fire. Such an



Jim Curry

TIOGA PASS FROM POOLE PLANT



Narrow Gauge Engine at Keeler Yards

extensive undertaking as the celebration could not have reached its thoroughly successful conclusion without the complete cooperation of the committee and the community. While giving credit to all it is no detraction to anyone to say that the moving spirit was Father J. J. Crowley who conceived the idea; planned details and saw to their furtherance and accomplished more in the way of widespread publicity than has ever been attained by any other peaceful occurrence in the county.

While the Darwin, Panamint road job and celebration were the dominant features in 1937 in the history of District IX there were a lot of other day by day operations going on that are worthy of more than passing notice.

The winter of 1936-37 brought with it one of the largest and longest snow seasons on record. Extra efforts to keep U.S. 395 open were not fully successful and the road was closed at short intervals. The roads into Mammoth and June Lake were open intermittently only. The Montgomery Pass road into Nevada was kept open all year. Heavy snow years not only add to the volume of snow to be removed from the highways but build up large drifts on the slopes above the highways which form the dreaded avalanches and slides. Deadman Hill provided one of these hated slides while a devastating avalanche occurred at Silver Lake between Carson's Camp and the Power Plant.

Considerable local complaint from the citizens of Mono County was evident throughout the winter because of the closures of the road and local inconveniences. Spence Lowden was busy all winter at local civic organizations explaining the snow removal problems and policies.

As evidence of the part taken by the thinking people of Mono County the Mono County Board of Supervisors took no stock in the unfavorable comment on the efforts of the highway division to maintain communication into that county during the winter. They passed a resolution stating that they had nothing but the highest praise for the local personnel of the highway service for their earnest and untiring efforts to keep open for travel the highway north from Bishop to the State line.

Winter finally came to an end as all winters have in the past and the sun shone again and the troubles that beset the snow bound people disappeared with the melting snows and with the necessity of earning a living by catering to the tourists and the fishermen and campers. Tioga Pass was opened on July 1, 1937.

Highway safety was fast becoming a favorite subject of meetings and speeches due to the increasing toll of accidents, injuries and fatalities on the State highways. As the highways became better and the cars more powerful it was inevitable that speed would play a bigger part in the accident pattern.



*West Walker River Washout
1937*



Repair Operations 1937

George Jeffers, private secretary of Chief Cato of the California Highway Patrol, conducted a safety program at the Bishop Rotary Club in Bishop in January. In addition to the Rotarians present were Captain Otto Buer and officers James Ford, Rollin Bell, and Roy Roeper of the California Highway Patrol and Chief of Police Kenneth Horton.

Mrs. Paxton Lytle of Los Angeles, District Chairman of Highway Safety, held two meetings in Owens Valley before women's groups preaching safety. George Stinson, the "Singing Cop" was with Mrs. Lytle talking and singing safety.

Highway safety was tragically brought home to the people of Inyo County in an accident which took the life of Charles Partridge, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors of Inyo County. In the vicinity of Cinco, some 16 miles north of Mojave, flood waters in their infrequent wanderings cross the highway in large paved dips in the pavement. Ordinarily these dips are dry but on this particular March day one of them was full of water and Partridge's speeding car was unable to plow its way through the torrent.

Legislatively the 1937 lawmakers passed only one act materially affecting the operation of the Division of Highways. A three cent per gallon tax was placed on diesel fuel. No special use was specified for the funds thus raised, however, the 1938 special session legislators rectified this oversight by providing that the funds thus provided should be expended in replacing bridges which had become deficient in any manner.

In the fall of 1937 the Headquarters Office of the Division of Highways raised its standard of lane width from ten feet to eleven feet. Divided highways of four lanes were becoming more and more popular and practical. The division strip was originally made four feet wide and curbed on both sides. In such cases the inside lane was made twelve feet wide. At this time in the highway history the freeway principle was just becoming advocated as the answer to the areas of congestion of the big cities and the fast growing accident rate.

Changes in the District's personnel during 1937 involved mostly additions to the engineering staff to help out with the inspection and handle contracts which were doing so much during this period to improve the back road highways. Most prominent of the additions to the staff were Howard Caton and Fred Pracht, Associate Highway Engineers who handled most of the bigger projects. Howard came to Bishop from the Redding District while Fred came from the Los Angeles Highway District.

Ralph V. Murray came from the Eureka District while Ray Riley was reinstated and both were put to work as resident engineers on smaller jobs and assistants on the bigger jobs.



Casa Diablo Hot Springs



Tom's Place

Other engineers brought in from other highway districts were Charles P. (Chuck) Carter, Junior Highway Engineer from Los Angeles; Alfred Lee Himelhock, Senior Engineering Aid from Los Angeles; and Richard Malone, Senior Engineering Aid from Los Angeles. David M. Whipp, Raymond H. F. Boothe, and John M. Hague all Senior Engineering Aids were hired directly for field and office work. Byron L. Green, Title Draftsman Delineator was moved up from Los Angeles to help out with the finished plans.

Two top flight engineers left the District during the year. The transfer of Al Briney to Headquarters Office deprived the District of the Associate Highway Engineer who was handed all of the biggest and toughest contracts in the District. Al was one of the busiest of all of the field engineers often having two or three projects under his direction going on at one time.

Another Al was lost to the District by the transfer of Albert E. Simmons to District IV at San Francisco. Al was also one of the busiest of the younger engineers rotating between field and office assignments and occasionally handling a contract on his own.

Within the confines of the District Office building there was a limited amount of shifting of personnel from desk to desk. Doris E. Myers after a series of temporary appointments finally left the building permanently. Helen B. Decker came to work on a permanent basis about the time Doris left. Jacquelyn Culver began typing letters during this period. Even earlier in this year Ivadel Mello came to work as an Intermediate Steno as likewise did Gladys I. Horton, daughter-in-law of Bishop's beloved Fire Chief Les Horton.

In the accounting room Gladys Sink took on the duties of an Intermediate Account Clerk. Frank Faulkner, after serving as a Timekeeper Clerk at Crestview under the supervision of Superintendent Joe Lemos, was transferred from the day labor to the staff payroll and assigned duties involved in the report department and helping in connection with the personnel records.

BACK TO NORMAL

Lacking a Darwin to Panamint project, a Death Valley-Mt. Whitney celebration, an extraordinary wet winter, or a hectic construction program the year 1938 was rather a mild and quiet one in the affairs of the highway. Only five highway contracts were awarded during the year. Two were on the main line road and three were on the secondary roads.

G. W. Ellis contracted to regrade portions and to resurface 8.33 miles of the old concrete pavement from the Los Angeles County line to five miles north of Rosamond, using plant mixed surfacing. This job cost \$54,656. Fred Pracht was the resident engineer and he had as his assistants Paul Evans, F. E. Norton, D. M. Whipp, Sam Ringold, Dennis Bouch and George Ullom.

Away at the other extreme end of the District the A. S. Vinnell Company was grading and placing a road mix surfacing on 3.5 miles of highway between Sonora Junction and Coleville at a cost to the State of \$78,577. Howard Caton was the resident engineer. This job extended over until July 1, 1939 before it was completed. Howard had L. H. Bradley, L. E. Steele, C. M. Rose, A. M. Chamberlin, Herb O'Donnell, A. L. Himelhoch, F. E. Norton, D. L. Price and W. D. Hege as assistants at various times during the life of the contract.

Between four miles and twelve miles east of Mojave on U. S. 466 J. A. Casson contracted to grade and to road mix surface treat 7.56 miles of this important cross country highway. Cass Rose was the resident engineer on this \$36,613 contract. Assistants on this job were R. V. Murray, C. W. Clawson, E. F. Laflin, F. E. Norton, E. S. Longfellow Jr. and A. L. Himelhoch.

Paul Evans had himself a residency all by himself when he was assigned to A. S. Vinnell Company's contract for \$4,495 to grade and penetration oiling project covering 0.66 miles some 17 miles southeast of Keeler on the Lone Pine to Death Valley highway.

Oswald Brothers took on a 11.05 mile contract to grade and road mix surface treat the highway from the east boundary of Death Valley National Monument to Death Valley Junction. This job cost \$53,097 and had Joe Stanley as resident engineer. His helpers were Warren Ford, Carl Lind, H. S. Bridgeman, D. J. Bouch, George Ullom and W. D. Hege.

Disaster overtook the District on February 20 when an explosion and fire destroyed the Conway Summit maintenance station during the height of the snow removal season. Four men were injured and equipment to the value of about \$70,000 was destroyed by fire. All the machinery of the Division used between Leevining and the Dressler ranch near Bridgeport was in the truckshed, an



Before



After



After

Conway Summit Fire of Feb. 20, 1938

unusual circumstance. The night shift whose work was to be over at 8 o'clock, had brought in the Snogo to get it in running condition. Water vapor from the gasoline gathered on the inside of the tank and in this case it had sunk to the bottom and frozen, shutting off the flow of fuel. The 30 gallon tank had been emptied and the ice in the tank was being melted by the use of hot water. Everything in the fire line was out; the oil furnace had been extinguished and no one was smoking. At five minutes to 6 o'clock there was an explosion of the gasoline vapor in the building. Ralph Thompson, Snogo operator, was blown from the top of the machine to the floor where he inhaled some of the flame and seared his lungs. James Kehler and Orville Drew received burns on their hands and faces, and were taken to the West Portal Hospital. Mechanic Floyd Weeks was blown out through the back door of the shed, the door also being blown off. Floyd Jordon, fifth man in the place, received minor injuries. In the place was a quantity of gasoline in drums, with acetylene, oxygen and other materials. With the explosion the room was instantly all ablaze. While the covering of the building was sheet metal its framework was of wood and burned rapidly.

Arrangements were immediately started to replace the station which work was done before the start of the following snow removal period. The loss of the Conway station by fire pointed the way toward a fire prevention program throughout the entire State with respect to State owned and rented facilities.

Tioga Pass opened this year on June 30th.

Culminating a long period of concern over mounting highway accidents Headquarters Office of the Division of Highways created a new Department of Safety at Sacramento with authority to ferret out the reasons for the appalling number of accidents and to suggest methods of abating the highway toll. The man imported to head this department was John W. Vickrey, erstwhile District Engineer at Bishop but more lately the District Engineer at Eureka.

The most immediate effect of the creation of this department was the spiriting away from Bishop of the Office Engineer of the District IX Highway Office, one Milton Harris. As is customary when someone leaves the district those left behind rally around to bid them hail and farewell. The Lowdens helped bid him goodbye at a party given by them as well as joining in the general office and community banquet given at Keough Hot Springs attended by some 50 persons.

The local papers were full of highway notes telling of Spence Lowden's activities at various meetings, service clubs and other public gatherings, showing that he was especially active in carrying the highway story to the people.

The Engineers' Club in Bishop had occasion to hear Serge Ray tell of his engineering experiences in surveying for a railroad across Siberia in the early 1920's.

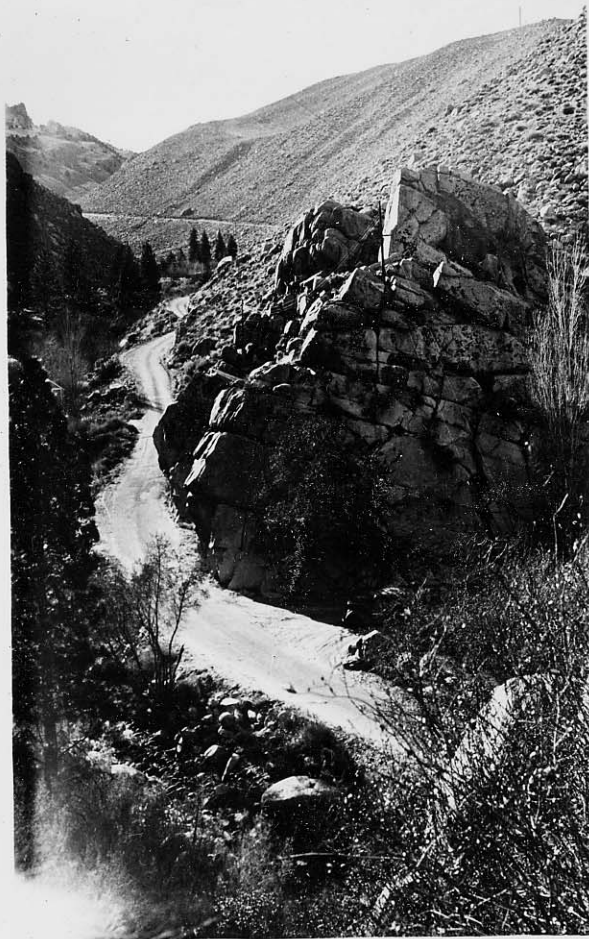
Politically Culbert L. Olson was elected Governor of the State of California and for the first time in years California had a Democratic regime. While Governor Olson changed members of the California Highway Commission and replaced Earl Lee Kelly as Director of Public Works with Frank Clarke, he recognized the talent and impartiality of Charles Purcell by keeping him on as the State Highway Engineer.

The people who actually do the work in District IX made moves to suit themselves during the year which considerably changed the personnel picture. Added to the District were four young engineers from the wet hills of Humboldt County in District I. E. Forbes Laflin, Phillip Harris, Eben Longfellow and Charles Clawson all began the District IX chapter in their careers in early November. George Farnsworth came to the District as an Associate Highway Engineer from District VII at Los Angeles and was engaged primarily in the maintenance department.

Eleven of the younger engineers moved on to different districts in furthering their highway careers after varying tenures in the land east of the Sierras from six years to nine months. Ray Boothe stood it the least length of time, going to the Bridge Department after nine months time. Ray Raley went to the Stockton District after only a year's time. Richard Malone spent only sixteen months before he decided the desert was not for him. He arranged for a transfer to the San Luis Obispo District. Also moving on to San Luis Obispo this year were Sam Ringold after three years in the desert and Donald Price who likewise had had three years of sand and sage.

Wendell Ammon after four years in the Bishop area transferred to the Stockton District as did O. R. Westlund and Horace Graber. Herb O'Donnell felt he'd like Fresno better than Bishop even after four and one half years of the latter. Nearly five years of extremely active participation in the affairs of District IX came to an end with the transfer of Merle Ellis to the San Francisco District in October of 1938. The Bridge Department in Los Angeles found a place for Francis Noel.

In the District Office proper there were only three personnel shifts all year. Frances Sangster's name first appeared on the District's payroll on February 1, 1938 having moved her things from one side of the accounting room to the other. This move transferred her from Shop 9 to District IX. Both Shop and District accounting offices were under one head and in one room.



1938



1933

*The Bishop Creek Road
Route 76*

Audrey Symons resigned her steno job in October to take full time care of her rancher husband and later Mono County Supervisor, Bill Symons.

Sabina Collins transferred her affections from District IX to the California Polytechnic School at San Dimas in October. With Milt Harris gone to Sacramento her heart was not completely in tune with Bishop. Separation of Milt and Sabina didn't work out at all and in about one year Sabina Collins became Sabina Harris.

RADIO COMES TO BISHOP

The construction tempo picked up in 1939 to overshadow 1938 and to par 1937 in the number of contracts awarded. A total of nine contracts was put into action during the year and thus continuing the policy of modernizing old sections of the main highway and getting the secondaries in a travelable condition.

On highway No. 23 three projects were undertaken this season. R. E. Hazard & Sons were paid \$61,781 for completing the modernization of the old concrete pavement from north of Rosamond on into Mojave. This regrading and plant mix surfacing project covered 7.76 miles and included the four lane pavement section at the railroad crossing just south of Mojave. Cass Rose represented the State, assisted by W. D. Gege, F. E. Norton, E. F. Laflin, A. L. Himelhoch, R. V. Murray, C. W. Clawson and George Ullom.

The 5.94 miles extending from nine miles north of Lone Pine to Independence were regraded and surfaced with plant mixed surfacing by Basich Brothers at a cost of \$60,035. Fred Pracht was the resident engineer assisted by D. I. Bouch, A. M. Chamberlin, Lloyd Bradley, George Ullom, A. T. Moore, E. F. Laflin and R. V. Murray.

Up in Mono County a contract was let to Basich Bros. with an extremely unusual feature to it in that it included work on two different routes, one on a primary route and one on a secondary route. On Route 23 work included grading and road mixed surfacing from nine miles south of Mono Lake to Mono Lake, while on Route 111 it included grading and surfacing from Route 23 over a distance of 2.2 miles to June Lake, all at the very nominal expenditure of \$15,379. While this contract was let in 1939 no actual work on it was done until 1940. Four different men took their turns as resident engineer. At times W. I. Templeton, Howard Caton, Joe Stanley and A. T. Moore were in charge of the work. Ted Smith was the only engineer on the job who was not listed as "boss."

Basich Brothers also took on in 1939 a twenty mile contract for applying liquid asphalt SC2 at the rate of one half gallon per square yard over an 18' width between Mono Lake and Benton on the Mono Mills lateral. This project took exactly one month to complete and cost \$7,813. A. T. Moore was the only State man on the project.

Over on the westerly end of the Walker Pass road in Kern County's portion of District IX Rexroth and Rexroth of Bakersfield undertook a \$7,215 contract to add imported borrow to the roadbed and to mix it with liquid asphalt SC4 upon two portions of State highway, totaling 1.57 miles. Kenneth Peirce was the resident engineer and required no additional help.

A very much needed and long awaited project was put under contract in early 1939 with the award to J. A. Casson of Hayward to grade and apply a bituminous surface treatment thereto to the 6.97 miles portion northeasterly from Benton Station to the Nevada State line. This welcome project which connected directly to Nevada's excellent highway over Montgomery Pass cost California the sum of \$46,670. Fred Pracht was the resident engineer assisted by George Ullom, E. L. Smith and A. T. Moore.

The pioneering down the East Walker River easterly from Bridgeport over the so called Sweetwater road was contracted out to Basich Brothers. The entire 13.35 miles from Route 23 to the Nevada State line was graded and a penetration oil treatment applied. The amount of grading done was extremely limited, the general intent being to get a road of sorts pushed through. The connection to the road in Nevada was so poor on the California side as to put the Golden State to shame, however, based on the amount of traffic the Nevada highway at this point is way over designed. Basich Brothers were paid \$22,750 for doing this work. Howard Caton was the resident engineer aided by Charles Clawson and E. F. Laflin.

About the busiest engineer of the year was Fred Pracht. He was in charge of a 12.1 mile road mixed surfacing project covering six separate locations between the Natural Soda Products Plant near Keeler to Panamint Sink. Ruddy and Corfield contracted to do this work and for their efforts were paid the sum of \$15,641. A. T. Moore was Fred's assistant on this contract.

Fred Pracht was also resident on Anderson and France's contract for grading and road mix surfacing on the 1.2 miles area from 9.6 to 10.3 miles southeast of Keeler. This small project was completed just before Christmas and cost the State \$3,982. Dennis Bouch was the only helper Fred had on this contract.

Plans for the future were running high and the building on South Main Street was too small to house the highway personnel, particularly the drafting room personnel. Additional office space was rented on the second floor of the Bulpitt Building at Main and Church Streets for the accommodation of those draftsmen who could not crowd into the District Office drafting room. About fifty engineering employees were on the staff payroll at this time.

In November work started on minor additional alterations to the District Office. More space was made available in the drafting room and accounting room wings. A sound proof room was added to house the radio equipment upon completion of the radio installation program. A room was added to the side of the accounting room for the bookkeeping machines.



Independence from the South - 1939



*Big Pine
1949*

Shop 9 under the capable management of John Stein this year completed its Bishop Shop expansion so that it now had 15,776 square feet of covered space. The main Shop building was 60' by 120'. A new three ton traveling crane with a range of 80' of traveling distance was a new feature in the Shop. Another recent addition to the Shop was an hydraulic press capable of exerting 60 tons pressure. Shop 9 had an inventory value of equipment under its care approaching \$275,000. In addition its parts inventory for repairs and replacements was in the neighborhood of \$28,000.

The maintenance department under the guiding hands of Clarence Cleman now had approximately 185 full time employees. Maintenance stations were located as follows: Under the Mojave Superintendent - Mojave, Olancho, Weldon and Homestead; under the Independence Superintendent - Independence, Big Pine, Deep Springs, Keeler, Death Valley, Panamint Springs and Bishop; under the Crestview Superintendent - Crestview, Sonora Junction, McGee Creek, Conway Summit, Benton and Tioga Pass at Warren Creek.

Construction was underway this season for a combined bunkhouse and cook house at Conway Summit. Such arrangements were necessary in order to hold wintertime personnel up on this bleak hump.

Beginning in 1936 the compilation of accident statistics became a routine part of the District's operation. For the immediate past three years (that is 1936, 1937 and 1938) there was recorded a total of 402 accidents, most of which took place on the main artery from the Los Angeles County line to the Nevada State line. Of these 402 accidents 97 occurred in Kern County, 170 in Inyo County and 135 in Mono County. It didn't seem to make much difference whether it was daylight or dark as a breakdown of these accidents revealed that 44% happened after darkness fell and 56% occurred in broad daylight.

The year 1939 saw the authorization of a short wave radio communication system for the District's maintenance department. Fletcher Abadie was the first radio technician assigned to the District but Fletcher didn't stay long. In spite of having to put up with a long series of different radio technicians the system was put into operation and functioned very efficiently and was of inestimable value to the maintenance operations and the snow removal program.

The legislators at Sacramento saw the light on what was happening to our best highways in congested areas and passed an excellent freeway law at their regular 1939 session.

The personnel of District IX got themselves involved in switching jobs again to a certain extent during the year but



Mobile Unit at Crestview



Chuck Carter at the Microphone

not quite up to the exodus of 1933. Six shifts occurred in the District Office. Probably the most momentous event which occurred was the coming to work of Dorothy Vellom. Dorothy was hired as an Intermediate Account Clerk with previous experience with the Department of Employment. Considered to be a social butterfly and not expected to stick she was given several short time appointments before she convinced everyone that she was composed of finer stuff than most people of the office considered. Dorothy's maiden name was Sherwin and she comes from the pioneer family who built the first road over Sherwin Summit and engaged in the toll road business years before. Her husband, Ralph Vellom, the self styled "Maverick" is the Inyo-Mono representative of the State Board of Equalization.

Another prominent conversion to this area occurred in January when Bill Savage became a permanent member of the family. Bill has been most prominently identified with the maintenance department office.

Kathleen Kaill came to the District from the Shop as a steno while Gladys Horton terminated two years with the District to go to the Shop.

Zorena Farnam after two and one half years of operating the bookkeeping machine was transferred to the Board of Equalization at Sacramento. Newton Evers was laid off as a Junior Clerk in January. Newt is now with the Department of Employment in Bishop.

Eleanor Willson accepted employment in January as a Junior Steno and found the office a happy hunting ground. Eleanor was from Big Pine and the office romance which ensued between her and Al Himelhoch kept the office in a dither. Eleanor resigned in November and marched Al to the altar.

Two Senior Engineering Aids constituted the entire loss of engineering force during the year. John Hague and David Whipp both resigned in May for other employment.

FATHER CROWLEY

Production shifted into a higher gear in 1940 when a total of twelve highway contracts was awarded to continue the modernization of the State highway system east of the mountains and out in the desert.

Five contracts continued the work on the life line of Inyo-Mono, Route 23, and on three of them Basich Brothers underbid all others. The largest of their three jobs was the 8.96 mile grading and plant mixed surfacing project from Olancha to Cottonwood Creek for which they were paid the sum of \$30,732. Fred Pracht was the resident engineer assisted by L. E. Steele, Ken Peirce, Joe Stanley, Lloyd Bradley, E. F. Laflin, R. V. Murray and George Ullom.

The next job Basich took on was the project from Big Pine Airport to Big Pine, a distance of 1.62 miles. This grading and plant mixed surfacing project cost \$25,859. Fred Pracht shifted himself northerly along with Basich Brothers from the Olancha job. His assistants were A. T. Moore, A. M. Chamberlin and George Ullom.

Basich Brothers third main line contract was for the crushed rock seal coat on the Ellis contract from Rosamond to Mojave, 7.76 miles at a cost of \$5,223. Cass Rose was the resident and had more help than he needed but they were present from the Ellis contract.

Elsewhere on Route 23, Brown & Doko were paid \$10,425 for applying a penetration oil treatment to the shoulders and a screenings seal coat to the traveled way over a distance of 23.16 miles from Armisteads in Kern County to 5.5 miles north of Little Lake in Inyo County. Just to show his versatility Fred Pracht was not only resident engineer but all of his own helpers on this job.

The last job on Route 23 awarded in 1940 was also a combination job having a portion of it on U.S. 466 west of Mojave. On Route 23 at nine locations G. W. Ellis was engaged in regrading the roadbed, building drainage dips and placing plant mixed surfacing over a total mileage of 8.45 miles. Nine locations on Route 23 (U.S. 6) and one location on Route 58 (U.S. 466) were worked over on this contract at a cost of \$63,469. Cass Rose was the resident engineer assisted by W. D. Hege, Eben Longfellow, F. E. Norton, A. L. Himelhoch, P. C. Harris, E. F. Laflin, George Ullom and R. V. Murray.

The Sonora Pass road came in for its first construction contract this summer with the award to Basich Brothers of a \$41,440 contract for grading and road mix surfacing of 2.27 miles from the West Walker River to U.S. 395 at Sonora Junction.

Howard Caton assisted by Bob Roberts looked after the State's interests. The reinforced concrete box girder bridge over the West Walker River was constructed at this same time under a Bridge Department contract to the Campbell Construction Company of Sacramento. The 150' long structure cost the State \$35,342.

The Tioga Pass road also got its first real construction job during the summer of 1940. This high altitude job extended for 2.51 miles from the east gate entrance to Yosemite National Park to Lake Ellery and involved both grading and road mix surfacing. Isbell Construction Company of Reno, Nevada was paid \$75,300 for their work. Joe Stanley was the resident engineer and had as his assistants Lloyd Bradley, J. H. Hussey, A. M. Chamberlin, Deane Bowers and A. A. Kambeitz.

The June Lake Loop road received the attention of two contracts both in the Grant Lake area. Along the north shore of Grant Lake for 4.01 miles Isbell Construction Company did the grading and road mixed surfacing at a cost of \$63,287. Joe Stanley was also the resident and had help from Deane Bowers, A. M. Chamberlin and Dennis Bouch.

Basich Brothers were paid \$7,865 for grading and applying a light penetration oil surface to 1.25 miles from U.S. 395 westerly to Grant Lake, tying into the Isbell job. Howard Caton, aided by E. F. Laflin and Paul Hine represented the State on this contract.

Continuing work on the Lone Pine to Death Valley highway included two contracts during this year, both engineered in the field by Fred Pracht. Grading and road mixed surfacing over a distance of 1.1 miles at Panamint Springs was contracted for by George E. France and grossed him the sum of \$8,031. Ken Peirce helped Fred with the engineering.

The portion of State Route 127 continuing on past Death Valley and south of Shoshone was the scene of Roland T. Reynolds' contract for grading and oil mixing. Officially termed as from 1.7 to 6.7 miles south of Shoshone this project cost the State \$35,954. Assisting Fred Pracht on this job were Alfred T. Moore and L. E. Steele.

The big event in the maintenance department of the year was the final accomplishment of the District's radio network. The major control station was in the Bishop District Office with field sets at the various maintenance stations. Mobile units were installed in key snow removal vehicles. Faster weather and road information reporting became effective at once. January 2, 1940 was the official birth date of District IX's radio system.

Heavy maintenance activity was reported on the Mono Mills highway running cross country from U.S. 395 south of Leeving to U.S. 6 at Benton Station. Stabilization of the highway across the pumice flats and the sandy areas was done by State forces using liquid asphalts.

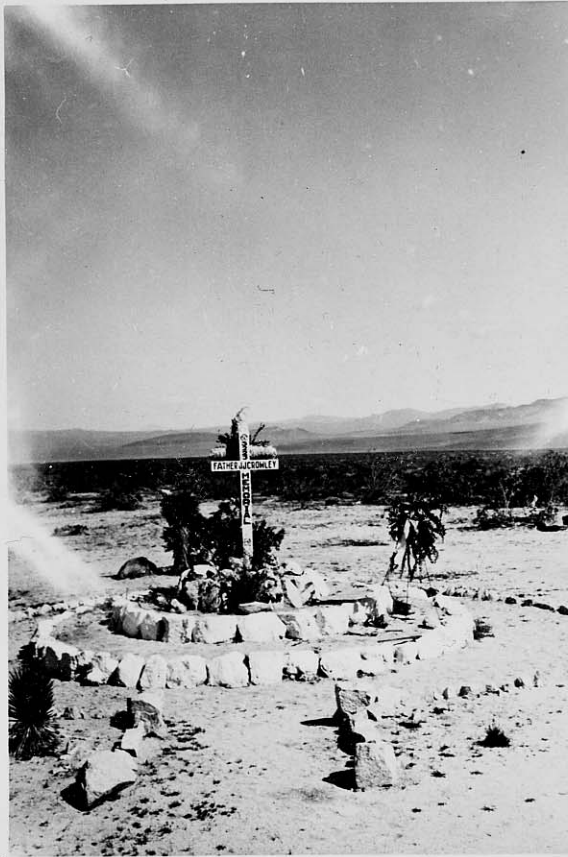
Tioga Pass was opened for tourist traffic to and from Yosemite Valley on June 8.

Due perhaps to the increasing hazard and accidents occurring between motor vehicles and stray animals (cows, horses, elk, deer, donkeys) an extensive study was completed in early March on open cattle ranges adjacent to State highways within the District. A new type of sign was designed and approved for installation on the highways to warn the motorist of the possibility of cattle being on the highway.

Less than two weeks later Inyo-Mono's best loved citizen was himself a victim of a collision between his car and a stray upon the highway. Returning to his beloved desert, Monsignor Crowley's car collided with a cow near the junction of the Walker Pass with U.S. 6 at Freeman Junction. Father Crowley was killed and the entire area east of the Sierras mourned the passing of the "Desert Padre." Father Crowley was intensely interested in all phases of life beyond the high Sierras and it is not trite to say that all who knew him felt in him inherent trust, a trait that few other men possess. He was one of the founders of the Inyo Associates, a county wide organization to promote Inyo County and to see that Inyo County got what it had coming to it from the City of Los Angeles. Father Crowley was the pioneer instigator and dominant personality behind the Lone Pine-Death Valley "Wedding of the Waters" highway dedication and celebration, the like of which for a highway dedication has never been remotely approached anywhere in the State at any time.

Because the opening day of fishing season occurred one year on a Sunday and knowing full well that fishermen should not leave before mass, the good Father advanced mass from its normal time to 3 a.m. The church was packed by fishermen complete with fishing gear. The front pew was filled by prominent Masons giving mute testimony to the personality and character of this man of God. Father Crowley was deeply missed.

The CCC boys built a simple memorial to Father Crowley on the east side of the highway near Freeman Junction consisting of a mound of rocks painted white, surmounted by a white cross. Every year short and impressive services have been held at this spot in memory of the Desert Padre.



*Memorial to Father Crowley
at Freeman Junction*

The snow removal program during the winter of 1939-40 did not proceed as smoothly as the denizens of Mono County would have wished and so in preparation for the ensuing winter the Mono County Grand Jury saw fit to unanimously adopt the following resolution for Spence Lowden for, as the local press recorded, a well deserved commendation of an able and sincere officer:

"Resolved that the Grand Jury of Mono County reaffirm its confidence in Spencer W. Lowden, Division Engineer of the Department of Highways for this section, and express to him our appreciation of his constant efforts in the improvement of our highway system and his continuous and continual interest in the advancement of every detail connected with safe and easy travel and for his always courteous and patient attention to the suggestions and grievances both real and fancied of the people of our country.

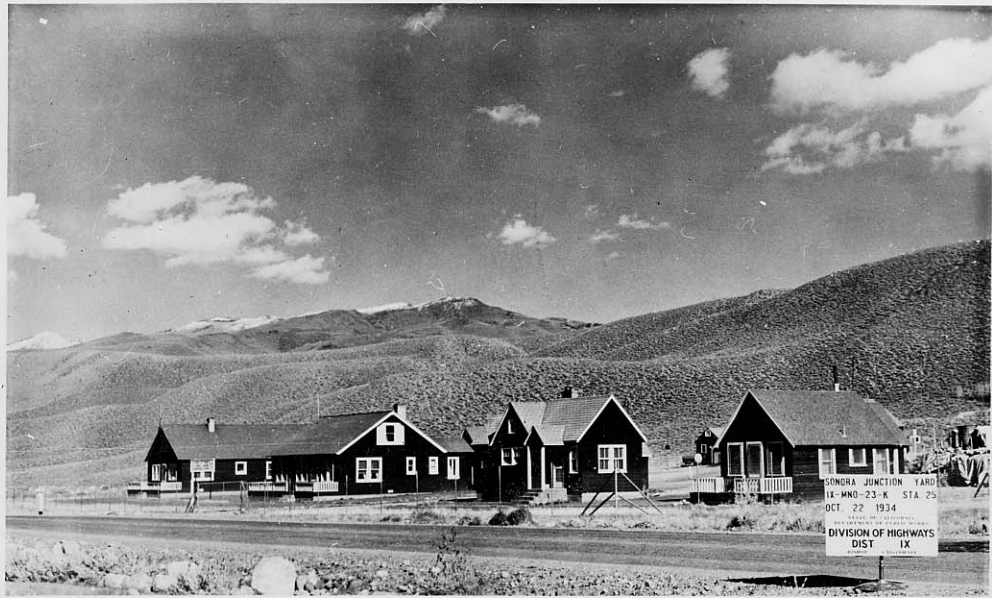
"Resolved further that we urgently recommend to the Department of Public Works, Division of Highways, that the snow removal program of the former years be continued and, if possible, extended from year to year. In this particular we recommend that for the ensuing winters the program of snow removal in the Mammoth district be extended to the end that the highway be cleared of snow up to the Twin Lakes Bridges in that section. We feel that the amount of revenue accruing to the State will more than compensate for the extra mileage and that such an extension will be of great benefit to Mono County."

Superintendent Joe Lemos having come to District IX in 1934 from a job as foreman at Groveland seized upon an opportunity to return to Groveland as a superintendent this June and thus severed six years of District IX employment.

His job as superintendent at Crestview was taken over by Tom Buell. Snow removal and mountain problems were no strangers to Tom as he came to Mono County from the equally mountainous regions of the Redding District.

The new wing in the Bishop Office to add more space to the accounting room was put into use this year by the Shop and District bookkeeping machine operators.

Miscellaneous highway bric-a-brac of the year included the formation of a distation class to assist applicants in preparing for future stenographic examinations. Frances Sangster and Dorothy Vellom were the perpetrators of this idea. Shop 9 acquired an electric gasoline pump. California State Employees Association sponsored a public speaking class one evening a week at the High School. Spence Lowden prepared a set of by-laws for the Bishop Civic Service Committee, which by-laws were adopted and Spence was properly thanked.



Sonora Junction Maintenance Station



Crestview Maintenance Station



Deep Springs Maintenance Station



Mojave Maintenance Station

The Three Flags Highway Association was especially active this year culminating its many promotional activities with its seventh annual meeting in December which for the first time was held in the Inyo-Mono area, meeting as it did in two day session at Lone Pine.

The year 1940 was a rather rough one on the tangled personnel affairs of the District's people. Only three additions were made to the staff payroll. Paul Hine came to the District from Headquarters Office as a Senior Engineering Aid. W. I. Templeton transferred to Bishop from District VII at Los Angeles as an Associate Highway Engineer. John Riggs was put to work as mail clerk in March.

No less than twelve of the staff personnel felt that the grass was greener elsewhere and thus for one reason or another forsook the desert and the mountains for more appealing climes. Eldred R. Kelley left the accounting room for Account Clerk duties at Norwalk State Hospital. George Farnsworth felt the urge to transfer back to the metropolitan din of Los Angeles from whence he came some two years previously. George had been helping Clarence Cleman run the maintenance office. With his going Cleman's help consisted of Bill Savage and Charles Carter.

Helen Decker forsook the receptionists desk in July after having ushered countless visitors about the office and taken numberless telephone calls and messages. Helen's position, when vacated, was entrusted to an office veteran of one year's service in the form and person of Dorothy Sherwin Vellom. Dorothy's intimate knowledge of the country, the people and what was going on and why people did and acted as they did was of unestimable value to Spence in his administration of the day by day affairs of the District. The receptionist's job was a natural for Dorothy because of her innate curiosity, which very quality made her of extreme high value to the District.

Three years of District IX was all that Ralph Murray wanted and thus another employee of the District was lost by reason of his resignation from State service. Bob Phillips severed a highway connection of four years by resignation but not because he didn't like the country. He subsequently was employed by the City of Los Angeles, Department of Water and Power, at Independence. The third engineer to resign his post this summer was a real veteran of fourteen years. Serving under District Engineers Somner, Vickrey and Lowden, Ken Peirce finally grew weary of highway work and resigned to further his own interests elsewhere.

Five young and promising engineers were transferred to other districts to fulfill their promises and to round out

their experience records. Deane Bowers, with nine years of District IX; Elmer Smith with six and one half years; Louis Steele with four and one half years; and Al Himelhoch with three years experience in the District were all transferred to the Los Angeles District. Phillip Harris was transferred to San Luis Obispo taking with him a background of two years in Bishop.

The gathering clouds of war on other continents and the instigation of Selective Service in the United States had its first effects on District IX which were directly noticeable by the granting of military leave to Ernest Shafer on October 22, 1940. Ernest became the first to serve his country from this District. He severed his relations with the District by resignation in 1944.

The second to leave the District to follow the flag was Eben Longfellow. Eben, likewise, did not return to State service after his eventual release from service.

DISTRICT PERSONNEL

Coming events cast their shadows before them certainly proved their veracity with the construction season of 1941 and in the personnel of the District. January 1941 saw the transfer of the two top resident engineers in the District because of lack of work to keep them busy. Fred Pracht and Howard Caton who came to the District three and one half years previously departed almost simultaneously. Fred went to San Luis Obispo and Howard to San Diego. Lloyd Bradley having spent nine and one half years wandering through the cactus and the pine and pinon trees was also transferred to San Luis Obispo. At this same time District V at San Luis Obispo took over the time sheet of A. M. Chamberlin who had signed his name to District IX payrolls for the past five years.

Only one construction contract of any size was undertaken in the District during 1941 although three relatively minor yet essential projects were also let to contract during the year.

Basich Brothers as was their wont picked off the big job of the year when they bid low for the 3.36 miles grading and plant mixed surfacing project from Cottonwood Creek to 3.3 miles northerly. For this project they were paid the sum of \$62,381. A. T. (Steve) Moore was the resident engineer helped out by Dennis Bouch, Wm. West and M. F. McAninch.

The Bishop to Lake Sabrina road received its first contract consideration this summer when James E. Anderson was paid \$18,953 for grading and road mix surfacing a portion in the valley between 1.5 miles west of Bishop and Otey's Corner covering 1.9 miles and including a new curve at the village. A. P. McCarton was the resident engineer assisted by a curious duo consisting of "Doc" Compton and Bob Roberts.

At two locations between Laws and Benton Station totaling 2.1 miles, Shea and Beebe did \$14,840 worth of grading and oil mixing under the critical eyes of Steve Moore and Charles Clawson.

The last contract performed in 1941 had for its purpose the protection of the existing pavement and consisted of placing 14.12 miles of crushed rock seal coat at two locations between Freeman Junction in Kern County and Haiwee in Inyo County. Basich Brothers were paid \$11,744 for this work. Cass Rose was the resident engineer aided by Paul Evans and Chuck Carter. Since this project was financed by maintenance funds the maintenance department furnished one of their own to aid in the inspection which explains how Chuck Carter got out of the office and on to the time sheet of this project.

As of March 26, 1941, Clarence Cleman resigned his position as District Maintenance Engineer, a high calling which he had held for nearly six years. The engineering profession does not offer within itself an opportunity for amassing great wealth nor even of becoming just a little better than financially independent. Shortly after Clarence came to Bishop in 1935 from Marysville he found that bachelorhood was not for him with Lois some three hundred miles away. Thus it was that Clem brought his bride to Bishop. Being of the type that could not stand inactivity Mrs. Cleman opened up a dress shop in Bishop. As time went on and business got better and better this shop expanded until it included both mens and womens furnishings and spilled out of Bishop to include branches of the Inyo Store in Leevining and Lone Pine. All this was too much for Lois to handle single handedly and so she called for help from Clarence. It is doubted if he enjoyed merchandising as much as engineering but his hand was forced. Since then he has been Bishop's Mayor, has acquired considerable property, enjoys time to play golf on week days and drives a Cadillac. These physical advantages seldom accrue to one who follows the engineering profession exclusively.

Not to replace Cleman but to take up where he left off James M. Hodges was transferred to Bishop from Headquarters Office in Sacramento. Jim's way was made somewhat easier than is usually the case in a transfer of top level engineers in that his predecessor was still available in the area and willing to answer questions regarding what had been done previously, why it was done so and what plans had been laid for the future and why.

At the end of the construction season, small as it was five more of the engineering fraternity severed their connections with the District. Charles Clawson departed for Headquarters after three years of the District; Paul Hine went on to District VII at Los Angeles and Forest Norton and W. D. Hege transferred to San Luis Obispo. Rumor around the office had it that Hege transferred from Bishop with a broken heart because he was unable to convince the fair Ivadel Mello that he was the one man for her in her life. Ivadel herself found that the man of her dreams was around in the person of Ted Smith and changed the Mello to Smith in relatively short order. That's the way it goes.

The records show that Cass Rose was laid off in November because of lack of work. Cass caught on elsewhere shortly as he is and has been with the Division of Highways for some time, mostly in Headquarters Office.

Presumably drafting work must have been in as great a demand in Los Angeles as it was in disrepute in Bishop as both of the District's Delineators were transferred to Los Angeles this year. Ellsworth Talmon and ~~Byron~~ Green were the two transferees.

Dorothy Dixon brought her booming laughter to the solemn confines of the District Office in April and remained to captivate her co-workers. About this time Jacquelyn Culver left after two years of pounding the typewriter. Now Jacquelyn Culver Cheeseman is the owner of the prosperous Culver's Sporting Goods store in Bishop.

In order to gain a good overall picture of the organizational structure of the District Office the May 1941 payroll was taken to show how things stood at that particular time. Because of the constant changing of personnel in an organization as large as the Division of Highways the organization is never static for long. Thus as of May 1941 this is how the staff was organized to perform its duties:

Spencer W. Lorden	- District Engineer
James M. Hodges	- Dist. Maintenance Engr.
W. L. Savage	- Assist. to Dist. Mtc. Engr.
W. I. Templeton	- Assistant Dist. Mtc. Engr.
Chas. P. Carter	- Assist. to Dist. Mtc. Engr.
F. R. Baker	- Dist. Right of Way Agent
Serge Ray	- Right of Way Draftsman
A. P. McCarton	- Chief Draftsman
B. L. Green	- Senior Delineator
E. R. Talmon	- Delineator
Sidney Silver	- Draftsman
T. H. Smith	- Draftsman
F. N. (Bob) Roberts	- Draftsman
W. D. Hege	- Draftsman
Glenn Compton	- Draftsman
Paul E. Evans	- Dist. Materials Engineer
Charles Clawson	- Dist. Laboratory Assistant
Frank Faulkner	- Reports
W. M. Rieth	- Safety
A. T. Moore	- Field Engineer
Dennis Bouch	- Field Engineer
M. F. McAninch	- Field Engineer
William West	- Field Engineer
Cass Rose	- Field Engineer
Joe Stanley	- Field Engineer
Forest Norton	- Field Engineer
Almeda Wheeler	- Chief Clerk
Mary Scheld	- Bookkeeping Machine Operator
Gladys Sink	- Accounting
Dorothy Vellom	- Receptionist; Secretary to District Engineer
J. S. Brandenburg	- Personnel
Frances Sangster	- Stenographer
Genevieve Muldoon	- Stenographer
Kathleen Kaill	- Stenographer
Dorothy Dixon	- Typist
John Riggs	- Mail Clerk - Filing

This fall saw the departure from the eastern Sierra stage of one of its real pioneers, Dwight Wonacott. His first employment card shows that he was hired on April 1, 1921 by Dick Badger as a mechanic's helper at \$5.00 per day. This same card shows, however, that he had worked previously on four different day labor work orders extending as far back as 1918. He was appointed as a truck driver in June of 1921 and continued to pilot various trucks in all parts of the District until July 16, 1928 on which date he was appointed to be a Maintenance Foreman. His experiences in handling men and jobs were rewarded a year and a half later when he was made the first maintenance superintendent in the District in direct charge of road work. Dwight had short tenures at Bishop and at Crestview before replacing Ben Gallagher at Independence in 1933. His transfer took him to Buellton in District V where he only stayed a short time before obtaining a location more to his liking as Superintendent at Fresno in District VI.

October 10, 1941 saw Charles Harbey take over the superintendency at Independence. Charles transferred to Owens Valley from a similar position in District XI at San Diego.

Along about this time the people of Tuolumne County banded together with the people of Inyo-Mono to pool their collective efforts toward making the Sonora Pass highway an all year highway. Because of the low standard of construction on this trans-Sierra highway and because of the low volume of traffic this pass has always been allowed to close with the first snowfall of the year and its opening has been delayed until the elements themselves contribute their share of the snow removal. In September of 1941 a meeting of Sonora Pass advocates was held at Honn's Lodge near Bridgeport in Mono County. A crowd of some 140 people gathered together that day which was considerably in excess of the sponsors' expectations. Results from this meeting have been inconsequential.

Another pass to receive publicity this season was the non existent one from Coleville to Markleeville which when built would provide a connection from the south to Alpine County and Lake Tahoe which would stay within the territorial limits of the State of California. Current travel between these points had of necessity to be made via Nevada. The general route from Coleville to Markleeville was laid out as a State highway but was never built, presumably from lack of funds. The citizens of Alpine County were not just talking about their road but were busily setting about to earmark funds and draw up plans from actual field surveys.

The grim reaper took from the highway promotional field probably its most ardent worker with the passing of Wisner Gillette Scott in September. His age was announced as 95 at the time of his death. In 1910 when he was so extremely active in



Johannesburg

Ker 145-A Looking ahead 75' back of 0+00



*Keeler
1941*



*Benton
Station
1939*

the formation of the Inyo Good Road Club and actively promoted the good of El Camino Real he was 64 years of age. He started another career in organizing the Three Flags Highway Association in 1931 at the incredible age of 85 when any other man would have called it quits. He had laurels enough to rest upon but he also had a tremendous reserve capacity which would not let him join the sideliners. Inyo-Mono owes a deep debt of gratitude for the part W. Gillette Scott played in the early highway affairs of the area, a part which present generations find hard to believe was ever done or necessary.

The tourist economy being the prime support of Inyo-Mono Counties their citizens and representatives were constantly alert to provide the latest, best and most authentic road information to the core of their tourist supply center which was primarily the Los Angeles metropolitan area. Meeting in Death Valley the Inyo-Mono Association came up with the slogan "The Road is Always Open to the Snow Country." The feeling of the group was that with the new equipment that the State had in the snow country and the efficiency of the crews after years of working with snow, at worst the highway would only be closed temporarily for an hour or two.

With the coming of the "Day Which Will Live in Infamy" December 7, 1941, the old order changed so much that this point logically marks the end of another era in the highway story. From this point on the highway picture undergoes a change certainly, for the next six years, not for the better. In a shooting war it seems that nothing gains and highways were no exception. So the scene shifts.

BOOK V

HIGHWAY SHUTDOWN

The immediate effect of the unleashing of the dogs of war was to essentially stop all State highway construction. The wheels of the highways ground almost to an abrupt stop. This in the face of the California Highway Commission's announcement of the previous year of a record breaking highway construction program and budget. All that was cast aside now in favor of an all out war effort.

No highway work was permitted unless it was geared to the war program by reason of being an access road to military establishments or vital defense plant installations. As the war continued on some concessions were made to the highways by permitting repair work or light asphaltic blankets over old pavements. The use of asphalts was restricted to a few specific grades.

The imposition of gasoline rationing in 1942 helped the highway case by keeping many vehicles off the highways but conversely the vehicles that damage the roads increased heavily because of the vast dependency of California upon the motor truck for movement of supplies. The many military training camps in California increased the truck content several fold due to shuttling of men and material in numberless convoys over all parts of the State.

The highway know-how of the Division of Highways was not, however, completely abandoned. The Federal Government turned over a very considerable number of military roads, access roads and flight strips to the State to design and construct for them. In spite of a general loss in manpower due to conscription of the military, volunteering for service, and the lure of the high pay and large volume of overtime at the shipyards and aviation plants, the State was able to handle all of the work given them by the Federal Government.

In addition to this access road program there still remained four functions which went on somewhat as before. Maintenance of the roads became an even greater headache than before and with less manpower with which to do it. Replacement or repair blanket work was undertaken and constituted the only State highway construction work. Field surveys and office design for future work on Post War Highway Planning was undertaken on a larger scale as this type of work required no critical material other than manpower. The purchase of right of way for these post-war projects constituted the last major highway function of the war years.

With the acceleration of a survey and design program an extremely large increase in the right of way program State wide necessarily followed. Problems centering on right of way magnified themselves severalfold because of the fact that the State was not in a position to actually build immediately upon purchase of the right of way. Because of the rapid and enlarged program of right of way a new department was created in the Headquarters Office of the Division of Highways to deal specifically with right of way and its attendant headaches. Heretofore right of way was a stepchild of the Department of Contracts and Right of Way, which department largely confined itself to legal matters. Frank Balfour was picked up out of the Los Angeles District Right of Way and placed in charge of the entire State's Right of Way Program, policies and problems.

In spite of the war a gubernatorial election was held in 1942 with former Attorney General Earl Warren defeating the incumbent Governor, Culbert L. Olsen. Shortly after Earl Warren took office the 1943 legislature changed the status of the California Highway Commission by creating a seven man commission with six members to be appointed from the State at large to serve definite four year terms rather than serving at the will and pleasure of the Governor. The seventh member and ex-officio chairman was to be the Director of Public Works.

Governor Warren exhibited sound judgment in his appointment of State Highway Engineer since 1928, Charles H. Purcell, to be his Director of Public Works and Chairman of the California Highway Commission. Assistant State Highway Engineer George T. McCoy stepped up to the State Highway Engineer's job and Fred Grumm moved to the Assistant State Highway Engineer's office.

Because of the real acute manpower problem, especially in the closing years of the conflict, a more extensive use of the female sex was made use of in the highway field. The gentler sex had always been utilized in accounting, filing and stenographic work but now they were being hired for drafting, computing, laboratory helpers, weighmasters and flagmen. Some of the women so employed so proved their worth that they have continued on far beyond the period of critical manpower shortage.

Reverting back to the local scene the first important event to occur after the start of the war was the importation of James L. Joyce from the Bridge Department at Sacramento. Jim had previously served a term in the accounting office at Fresno and was spirited away from Sacramento to head the District IX Accounting Department. This installation of Jim as head of the facts and figures department was occasioned in no way because of the manner in which Almeda Wheeler ran the department but because of Almeda's transfer to District XI at San Diego. The fact of an opening at San Diego was indeed fortunate for her as friend husband had previously moved to the San Diego area. The appearance of Jim Joyce on the District IX scene was somewhat

disconcerting as upon her return from a two day vacation Almeda encountered Jim ensconced at her desk. While Almeda was anxiously awaiting a transfer to San Diego, she had once been told it was off completely, she had no knowledge that the transfer had actually been arranged for her. Once the veils of doubt had been opened wide she was overjoyed at the opportunity to transfer to San Diego.

Her last day on the payroll was January 25, 1942 and culminated over 13 years of highly efficient service to the District. Thirteen years in one office is considerably more than normal for a woman and attested to the mutual trust, confidence and satisfaction derived from her work. Almeda was the guest of honor at a party of over 100 guests who assembled at the Bishop Elks Club to say their fond farewells and to present her with a beautiful wrist watch.

Not a single construction or repair project was started in the year 1942 nor were any Federal access or flight strip projects instigated. Survey parties and drafting room squads were however kept fully busy working on future projects.

Francis R. Baker left the District Office on the evening of February 14, 1942 but failed to return the next morning. A heart attack during the night wrote finish to his outstanding engineering career, nearly eight year of which had been spent in District IX as head of the Right of Way Department. Prior to his coming to Bishop he had had broad and extensive experience in charge of highway construction at many locations throughout the State.

From this point on Serge Ray took command of the District's Right of Way problems and except for a stenographer he was the entire Right of Way Department.

Kathleen Kaill took her steno book with her and departed for Indio to work for the Department of Employment in April, terminating three years of typing and dictation taking in the Bishop Office.

Paul Evans left for military service and since the testing work in the laboratory was of prime importance in working up future work Clyde Gates was imported from the San Bernardino district to take charge of the laboratory.

John Riggs finally made up his mind to quit his job after several false starts and resigned his mail clerk job in April in favor of other and more lucrative employment.

Shop 9 took a severe blow when John Stein departed for the Stockton District on January 14, 1942. O. R. (Junky) Thompson replaced John more or less on an interim basis since Junky was a Headquarters Shop trouble shooter. He relinquished the reins of Shop 9 on August 12, 1942 into the hands of George Siebert formerly from Shop 2 at Redding.

The Foreman of Shop 9 shifted several times since 1936 when Ralph Hildebrand turned loose his position; L. E. Bramhall was Shop Foreman from February 1, 1936 to September 15, 1937; Al Latour took over from then until January 10, 1939. The present incumbent Jimmy Goodwin has been boss of the mechanics since that latter date.

Just because there was a war going on made no difference to the elements in their continual onslaught to wreck man's endeavors to provide himself with a traversable road through the deserts and into the hills.

Snow during the winter of 1941-42 was of such volume that the opening of the high altitude passes was about a month later than what had come to be considered normal. Late June saw Sonora Pass opened and early July witnessed the opening of Tioga. Tourist traffic was nil so that the usual agitation for early opening of the passes was missing this summer.

X While snow was the problem in Mono County, Death Valley received heavy cloudburst activity, so heavy in fact that about eight miles of the highway in the vicinity of Furnace Creek Inn were completely destroyed and other sections were severely damaged.

A slide of colossal magnitude, accompanied by a thunderous roar and a large cloud of dust, brought down a considerable amount of mud and rocks on the Bishop Creek road just below Lake Sabrina. As so often happens in this type of emergency it occurred on a Sunday, thus disturbing the day of rest for the poor benighted maintenance men. Foreman Carl Cleland and crew responded at once and in due course opened a road so that the fishermen and campers could pursue their avocations in peace.

Superintendent Tom Buell's stay at Crestview was short-lived indeed from June of 1940 to July of 1942 spanned only a little over two years in the Mono mountains. Apparently it wasn't the snow Tom minded because he transferred to Truckee which put him in charge of the single most important snow removal problem in the entire State, that being the Donner Summit pass of U.S. 40. James G. Burke replaced Tom Buell at Crestview coming from his Foreman's job at Petaluma. Burke's career in District IX was continually beset with illness finally resulting in the necessity of his transfer back to Petaluma in November of 1944. Charley Delee took over the interim period at Crestview until the permanent appointment of Chuck Carter on January 1, 1945.

For the winter of 1942-43 Spence Lowden advised the people of Mono County that snow removal operations would not be done on the Mammoth Lakes road or the Sweetwater Road due to the impossibility of ~~securing~~ replacement parts for the snow

removal equipment. It would be necessary, he added, to hold the equipment formerly used on those sections as standing units that might be needed on roads more essential to the war effort.

December 1942 saw the induction of James Joyce into the armed forces after having been less than a year in his Chief Clerk's job. To do his work for him, in his absence, Charles Delee was promoted from a Timekeeper's job at the Convict Camp in the Trinity River country. At the end of nine months, the army and Jim Joyce couldn't see eye to eye with each other and the army, to save its reputation, decided to let Jim return to civilian status. Others say Jim talked his way out of the army; some say that Jim kept winning his sergeant's pay check each pay day, but the real truth of the matter is that Jim's feet would no longer propel him in a manner which the army felt that they should.

Upon Jim's release from servitude he took over his old job while Charley Delee did special accounting work, helped out in the Maintenance Department and took a fling at running the Crestview maintenance territory until relieved by Chuck Carter on January 1, 1945. In February 1946 Charley transferred to Shop 4 in the San Francisco area.

The first and only female war veteran turned out to be Dorothy Dixon who volunteered for the WAAC's in early 1943.

The editorial voice of the valley was most prominently identified with the Inyo Register printed in Bishop under the guiding genius of W. A. Chalfant. The January 1, 1942 issue was the last published under the ownership and management of W. A. Chalfant. The business, plant and good will were sold to George W. Savage and Roy L. French, owners then of the Inyo Independent and the Lone Pine Progress Citizen. George Savage was at a later period to become intimately connected with the highways of the State of California by reason of his appointment as Secretary of the California Highway Commission.

During 1943 the District put into action three contracts of a repair nature to strengthen the existing road and to prevent any further damage from occurring to the roadbed.

Basich Brothers still being in the area bid low for 5.98 miles of road mixed blanket, 1-1/4" thick between McGee Creek and Crestview. For this work they were paid \$10,467. Steve Moore was the resident assisted by a temporary employee, Frank H. Stevens.

From the Laws bridge over the Owens River on U.S. 6 to the Nevada State line a 2" road mixed blanket was placed over the old oil cake at several locations totaling 11.2 miles.

Phoenix Construction Company was paid \$43,186 for this work. W. I. Templeton was the resident engineer assisted at various times by Steve Moore, Glenn Compton, Frank Stevens, K. L. Williams and Sid Silver.

Phoenix Construction Company also picked off a \$13,184 contract to place a road mixed surfacing blanket over 8.67 miles both north and east of Mojave. Steve Moore handled this job for the State without any engineering assistance.

District IX's first military access road job got underway in 1943 and was for the grading and bituminous surface treatment of 16.08 miles running from the Antelope School on the south to U.S. 466 on the north and cutting through the heart of the Muroc Air Base in the extreme south eastern part of Kern County. In fact some of the south end of this road was actually in Los Angeles County.

Griffith Company was the successful contractor and was paid \$139,214 for his efforts. W. I. Templeton represented the State and had the most of what was left of the District's engineering force helping him out. Steve Moore, Clyde Gates, Glenn Compton, Dennis Bouch, S. S. Ives and K. L. Williams worked on this project.

Other than purely temporary help there were only two personnel changes in the District in 1943 which represents the very rock bottom of personnel turnover in the history of the District. Dorothy Conover started work in March doing typing and stenographic work. In June Warren Rieth who had been quasi-attached to the Maintenance Department taking care of safety matters decided to further his education and departed for the halls of learning at Massachusetts Institute of Technology away down east to study radar.

ACCESS ROAD WORK

The affairs of the highway were not particularly better off in 1944 than in 1943. This year produced only one repair job and that one consisted of placing an inch and a quarter thick road mixed oil blanket at seven locations totaling 7.1 miles between Mojave and Red Rock Canyon. The sum of \$16,686 was paid to Basich Brothers for the work done under this project. W. I. Templeton was the resident engineer and the only help supplied him was in having Maintenance Foreman V. C. Horton act as load checker.

Two access road jobs were put underway in late 1944. For the field inspection work District IX borrowed Roy F. Johnson, Associate Highway Engineer from the Fresno District and put him in charge of the access road construction. All future access road work in the desert areas was handled by Roy as resident engineer. At times when manpower personnel was particularly tough Roy's wife Vera was pressed into State service as Field Office Assistant. Four major jobs thus carry Vera's name on the engineering payroll.

The 16.08 mile access road cutting through the Muroc Air Base built in 1943 had only a light oil mixed surface on it so that with the heavy increase in traffic through the Base it was not long until the surfacing had more than it could take and began to yield beneath the heavy wheels of progress. A contract for \$13,985 was let to the Phoenix Construction Company to place a 2-1/2" road mixed blanket over this entire length of road. Beyond Roy Johnson the only help provided was maintenance labor to act as weighmasters.

Along about this period the Naval Ordnance Test Station began to make its presence known at China Lake some eight miles east of the sleepy little hamlet of Inyokern. N.O.T.S. had established itself as a permanent military base because of its testing program which would be continued whether there was a war on or not. A necessary adjunct to such a station is housing for the personnel and a service and shopping center. Such a shopping area quickly mushroomed immediately without the gates of the station and in a rather loosely use of the term called itself the town of Ridgecrest. Unlike a lot of boom towns Ridgecrest built most of its buildings in a permanent fashion as though it, too, was determined to stay and be a permanent part of the desert. The development of N.O.T.S. brought an influx of people to Indian Wells Valley and China Lake totaling close to 15,000 and as such Ridgecrest disenthroned Bishop as the metropolitan area of District IX although as of yet no State highway punctured this area.

Due to the large increase in traffic headed for Ridgecrest State highway U.S. 395 took a terrific pounding from

loaded trucks. The Federal officials took cognizance of the fact and allocated federal funds as a repair and improvement project and a contract for \$116,838 was awarded to Clyde W. Woods, Inc. for placing imported borrow and surfacing material and then oil treating the top area over 5.38 miles at several locations between Johannesburg and 1-1/2 miles north of Inyokern. This project also included the construction of two short reinforced concrete slab bridges over Little Dixie Wash and Airport Wash north of Inyokern. The Bridge Department sent F. M. Morrill to look after the bridge work while W. B. Skogerson, W. W. Wiltsee, A. G. L. Johnson and Vera Johnson all took part in helping Roy Johnson with the inspection and office work.

In tune with the times District IX put on several women employees during 1944 in connection with its staff engineering work. Lillian Meacham was the first so hired. She came to work from former employment as cashier for Joseph's Store in Bishop. She and her husband Verne had previously catered to the fishing and camping tourists during their ownership and operation of Fern Creek Lodge in the June Lake area. Lillian graduated into the blueprint, reproduction and drafting room filing position and has proven invaluable even unto this date in that work.

The second to win a home was Dorothy Bright. Starting with no previous engineering experience Dorothy has progressed up the ladder to the extent that she has become a squad leader and interim part time chief draftsman (woman). This is amazing progress for one with no formal engineering background and little or no actual field experience to see why jobs should be designed as they are. Dorothy works because she loves her work and not for filthy lucre since friend husband, George Bright, manages one of the most successful Safeway Stores in the entire chain albeit not so successful with his pinochle.

Naomi (Susie) Emrick was hired in August away from her clerkship job at the Inyo Store and put to work in the drafting room under A. P. McCarton plotting cross sections.

Fred Thompson joined the District IX family on April 17, 1944, coming to work from the U. S. Vanadium plant at Pine Creek. U. S. Vanadium operated the largest tungsten mill in the United States at Pine Creek some 21 miles north west of Bishop and its operation and personnel have contributed much to the over all economy of Bishop.

After this summer season W. I. Templeton who had been doing most of the District's resident engineering work resigned his job to fend for himself in the field of private endeavor. Gladys Sink also deserted the highways to demonstrate her culinary art to the general public. Lee and Gladys Sink thus began the operation of a restaurant.

Effective the last day of the year 1944 Charles Harbey was transferred from his Superintendency at Independence to a similar one at San Fernando in what amounted to a swap in jobs with Curtis T. Warren.

The winter season of early 1944 was on which really taxed the abilities of the highways, men and machines. A two day blizzard in the valley in late February caused a shutdown in roads and utilities. Almost all normal activities were closed down while old man winter had his fling.

Indicative of the fact that the pressure of the war effort was beginning to lift was the general action being taken by civic bodies, Chambers of Commerce, and the State legislature in providing for an accelerated highway program once the shooting was over.

The federal government passed legislation to provide funds to be expended on county roads for their improvement. The Federal Aid Secondary program was administered by the State Highway Department and thus this program enters into the highway story. A new department was created in Headquarters Office at Sacramento for the administration of the program and Harold B. (Red) LaForge was put in charge. Since there are only two full counties in District IX no changes were required at the District level to handle this work.

The year saw five more State highway repair type contracts put into operation, all of which served in a measure to protect and to add an increment of structural stability to the roadbed but did not appreciably add to the keeping up with the increasing demands of traffic. With the season of 1945 four full construction seasons had come and gone without the highways advancing or even keeping even. This four year vacation was sure to make its effect known in the years to come.

Over a 6 mile stretch between six miles north of Mojave and Cinco on U.S. 6 a 2" plant mixed surfacing repair blanket was placed under a contract awarded to Oilfields Trucking Co. of Bakersfield at a cost of \$42,261. Since this job was in the desert area it was turned over to Roy Johnson for control. Helping him were Clyde Gates, Don Woodward, Robert Lindfeldt and Mrs. Roy Johnson (Vera).

Basich Brothers undertook a 6.17 mile 2" plant mixed surfacing repair project from Fish Creek Road northerly to Bishop. This \$64,513 contract was engineered by Steve Moore with help from Fred Thompson and two temporary engineers G. N. Herron Jr. and D. W. Toulouse.

Steve Moore and Fred Thompson were also in charge of Vinnell Company's 6.04 miles repair project from Alabama Gates

to Whisky Canyon. This project involved the placing of a 1-1/4" blanket of road mixed surfacing at eight separate and distinct locations and cost \$18,888.

Vinnell Company also picked up a small \$11,493 contract for placing additional material to raise and widen the roadbed and to provide an oiled surface over 0.75 mile in the eastern part of Death Valley. Dennis Bouch was the resident and had his wife Mary on the payroll to take care of the book work.

As protection to a large mileage at relatively low cost a contract to place a crushed rock seal coat over 41.5 miles was awarded to Basich Brothers covering areas between Bishop and Coleville. Basich Brothers were paid \$55,013 for this work. Bill Savage started out as resident engineer but Steve Moore finished the project. Fred Thompson assisted throughout the job.

Three major projects were done during the summer of 1945 for the Federal Government in connection with the war effort. All were in eastern Kern County and all of the State's construction engineering was entrusted to Roy Johnson. A contract let to the R. W. Hampton Company netted them \$47,887 for grading and oiling 1.02 miles from the North Reservation Gate to Muroc School on the Muroc Air Base. Albert Johnson was the only engineering help assigned to Roy Johnson on this project.

An important connection from U.S. 395 to the N.O.T.S. at Ridgecrest was put into service with the completion of an 8.16 miles grading and oil surfacing project, officially described as from Route 145 near Rademacher to Inyokern-Trona Road. Arthur A. Johnson was paid \$66,233 for his work under this contract. Will Skogerson, W. W. Wiltsee and Vera Johnson were assistants to Roy Johnson.

The approach to N.O.T.S. via U.S. 395 is used primarily for the accommodation of traffic from and to the San Bernardino and Barstow areas. Traffic from the Los Angeles area approaches N.O.T.S. via U.S. 6 and the county road through Inyokern. The repair of these 12.2 miles of county road from U.S. 6 to N.O.T.S. was the subject of a contract let to the Lewis Construction Co. Two inches of plant mixed surfacing were placed over this road at a cost of \$74,188. Engineering inspection was supplied by Dennis Bouch, Clyde Gates, H. V. McDonald, Grove Nooney, F. L. Jackson and Vera Johnson. With the completion of this project District IX's part in the war road building operations came to a satisfactory end.

During the spring and summer season of 1945 there was only one staff change. S. Lewis Rohrer's name was added to the payroll and he was put to work helping out in the District Laboratory. Lew was a ~~mining engineer~~ who had the misfortune

to be caught, along with his wife Helen, by the Japanese when the Philippine Islands were overrun by the Nipponese during the early days of World War II. Finally released from Santo Tomas - a Japanese internment camp - the couple came to Inyo-Mono to recuperate from their harrowing experiences. Lew's mining experience made him a valuable employee in the District Laboratory.

The Maintenance Superintendent at Mojave, Grant P. Merrill, took advantage of the State's liberal retirement program and retired as of June 15, 1945. Grant had established the Mojave territory when it was put into existence in 1933 and left a well organized territory when he returned to the hills of his native Alpine County for a well deserved rest.

Herman Holt who replaced Grant at Mojave was native to District IX and had risen through the ranks to earn his promotion to a maintenance superintendency.

Charles P. (Chuck) Carter had taken over the superintendent's job at Crestview as 1945 opened and truly had a baptism of fire. Although the winter of 1944-45 produced a considerable amount of snow there wasn't enough of it present on a night in early April when fire destroyed the famed Mono County resort of Crestview Lodge located just across the highway from the Crestview Maintenance Station. The newspapers gave credit to Superintendent Carter and Foreman Ray Morgan for saving a small portion of the furnishings. Faulty wiring was believed responsible for the fire and the fire fighters were further handicapped by having to contend with the water in the fire hydrants being frozen. Crestview Lodge provided the only practical source of food and lodging for transient highway personnel in this area.

The forces of Adolf Hitler capitulated in May of 1945 and the soldiers of the Rising Sun melted before the atom bomb in August and fervent prayers of thanks were offered that the waste and horrors of war were over. Gasoline rationing was a thing of the past in August and the future held forth every hope for a normal resumption of events.

Those who served their country in World War II from District IX earned the gratitude from all of those members of the District IX family who stayed at home. The honor roll includes:

Gaius Abraham	Highway Maintenance Leadingman
Dennis J. Bouch	Junior Highway Engineer
Johnnie H. Brandon	Laborer
W. Earl Compton	Hwy. Equip. Operator-Laborer
George Davis	ditto (Died in Service)
Dorothy F. Dixon	Senior Clerk

George H. Dolan	Hwy. Equip. Operator-Laborer
Clifford R. Donnelly	Highway Maintenance Foreman
Paul E. Evans	Associate Highway Engineer
Francis W. Fox	Highway Maintenance Foreman
Percy A. Goforth	ditto
Harold V. Haskett	Laborer
James L. Joyce	Supervising Clerk Grade II
Ralph B. Keller	Hwy. Equip. Operator-Laborer
Charles T. Kispert	ditto
Tom Kurisky	ditto
E. Forbes Laflin	Junior Highway Engineer
George B. Lawman	Hwy. Equip. Operator-Laborer
Eben S. Longfellow	Junior Highway Engineer
Henry E. Maynard	Highway Maintenance Foreman
James W. McGee	Hwy. Equip. Operator-Laborer
Floyd T. Meeley	ditto
Robert L. Pruett	ditto
Albert C. Sangster	ditto
Paul Scanavino	Laborer
Sterling Searcy	Hwy. Equip. Operator-Laborer
Ernest A. Shafer	Junior Highway Engineer
Theodore H. Smith	Assistant Highway Engineer
Raymond A. Verges	Hwy. Equip. Operator-Laborer
Eddie A. Vernon	Laborer
Warren E. Wescott	Timekeeper Clerk

The return of peacetime brings to a grateful end a period which was productive of no real good to anyone and most certainly was of no real value to the highways although it did point up how vital the highways of California are to the economy of the State and how dependent our military effort is upon good highways.

BOOK SIX

POST WAR TEMPO

The shooting and disruptive forces of war were scarcely over when Mother Nature raised an angry paw and vented her wrath upon the desert sands of the Mojave. The month of August witnessed the start of the most destructive and widespread storms in the desert areas since the building of highways was undertaken. Cloudbursts and sustained rains played havoc with the thin ribbons of asphalt which mere man had established as his means of transit.

Not content with dropping buckets full of water upon the land, added insult and damage occurred when this water gathered volume and velocity and swept as a torrent, carrying rock, sand and debris along with it and invariably deposited it on the highway or if not that, then tearing out and undermining the highways' asphalt as it passed on its way to eventual seepage into the desert sand.

A particular cloudburst south of Little Lake flooded U. S. 6 and then piled high over the road a wall of sand and rock. This spot trapped more than 300 cars for several hours while the heroic and also hard worked maintenance crews had their weekend days off disturbed as they moved in to clear a one way path to rescue the cars and to open the road to other traffic.

Gasoline rationing had but recently been removed and the motoring public was beginning to travel about more extensively after years of limited driving.

The full fury of the cloudburst season hit the highways in mid and late October. Over one weekend more than 3" of rain fell along the eastern slopes of the Sierras providing in addition to a 50 year record rainfall, death, disaster and disruption. Red Rock Canyon became a raging torrent with huge slices of the roadbed washed away. Jawbone Canyon disgorged water, rock and sand over the highway. At Five Mile Canyon the torrents took over the roadbed and used it for a water course toppling several cars and causing at least one loss of life.

Every normally dry gulch and wash carried tumbling cascades of water and rolling boulders down and across the highway.

After the heavens had dried their tears and the waters had receded mostly to disappear into the sands of the desert, the maintenance department surveyed the scene and found it not good. Every man and piece of equipment were utilized to clear open a road through the piles of debris. Mostly the sand and rocks were just pushed to one side to permit two lanes of traffic. Washed out places were filled in and enough widening done in Red Rock Canyon to restore two way traffic.



14 1/2 miles N. 655 North - Storm Oct 1945

*Storm
Damage
1945*



Because of the heavy nature of the repair work and debris removal it was decided to let this work out to contract. The maintenance crews more or less confined their activities to getting the road open and repairing the critically damaged area so that traffic would be as little discommoded as possible.

As if these acts of nature were not sufficient to disturb the citizens and the highways, winter set in early this fall and while not particularly heavy lasted well into April. As if all this was not enough from the elements the crowning feature of her show was a severe earthquake in mid-March of 1946 which shook the area sufficiently to cause several breaks in the Los Angeles Aqueduct and resulted in more flooding of debris laden highways.

Snow removal operations by the highway crews were returned to the pre-war status again this winter. Tioga Pass was opened on June 8, 1946 with Sonora Pass being opened one day earlier.

The first post war highway construction contract let in the District was for the grading and plant mixed surfacing on U.S. 466 from Cameron to Mojave, a distance of 7.22 miles. This project was awarded in December 1945 but all work was done during 1946. Gunner Corporation was the contractor and was paid \$215,211 for their work. Roy Johnson was the resident engineer but he had lots of engineering help from Lew Wulff, Dennis Bouch, Don Toulouse, George Herron, Forbes Laflin, Fred Causey, Fred Jackson, Glenn Compton and Robert Gallagher.

During the life of the Gunner Corporation's job the E. W. Elliot Construction Company built two bridges in this area under contract which paid them \$89,736. A small bridge was built over the Los Angeles Aqueduct and a long bridge was built spanning Cache Creek. The Cache Creek Bridge totaling 273.5' in length made it the largest bridge yet built within the confines of the District. H. J. Scott represented the Bridge Department in the building of these two structures.

This same bridge contractor and this same bridge engineer collaborated in the construction of a \$77,339 bridge over Freeman Gulch later in the year. Part of the cost of the work included nearly a mile of approach highway which was engineered by Dennis Bouch.

Late 1946 saw the award of a contract to repair the storm damage of the previous October. Brown and Doko of Pismo Beach undertook to clean up the debris, do some minor grading and to replace road mix surfacing at six locations totaling 1.27 miles between Mojave and Olancho. For this they were paid \$49,161. Paul Evans was the resident engineer assisted by Dennis Bouch and Lew Wulff.



*Storm
Damage
1945*



IX-Ker-23-E Mi. 5.5 1mi. N.E. Homestead Storm October 1945

The second and last storm damage clean up job also involved re-routing of the highway at Five Mile Canyon where during the storm the torrent took over the roadbed as a water-course. A bridge was included over the canyon proper. A portion of this contract also included the clean up of debris and a dip construction in northern Kern County. Basich Bros. were paid \$202,763 for these 2.75 miles of grading, surfacing, debris removal and bridge construction. This contract was not underway until mid 1947 with C. R. Hagberg the resident engineer for the District and Jack Sylvester the resident engineer on the bridge portion. Emery Keady, Vaughn Marker and Allen Wilkerson lent their assistance to the work.

Immediate post war changes in personnel within the District were not too numerous considering the times. Dorothy Conover was the first to travel, resigning her stenographic position in December of 1945. She is now employed in the accounting office of the Chalfant Press in Bishop.

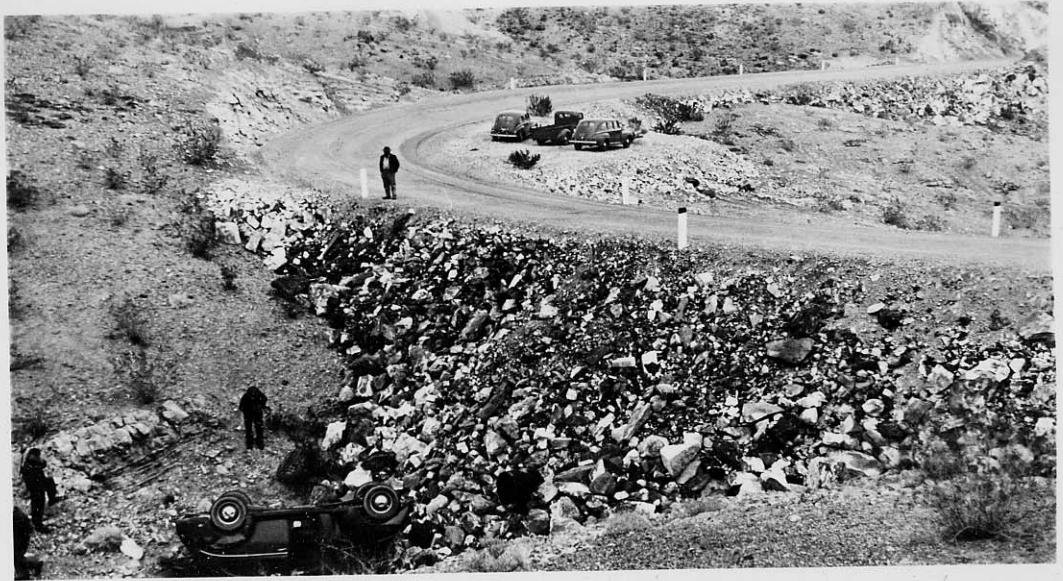
Rynard Bergman transferred into the District in February 1946 from the San Diego District's Maintenance Department and was at once installed as chief draftsman.

Charles Delee after bouncing around in the maintenance organization for three years found a more permanent and settled life in the accounting room of Shop 4 at San Francisco. Richard Rogers and Walter Weidman came from out of Uncle Sam's khaki to take up the engineering profession.

Etta Harris brought her hard working talents to the District in September of 1946.

Three of the more prominent resident engineers forsook long and established careers in the District for greener pastures elsewhere. Joe Stanley with seventeen years of District IX behind him transferred to the Marysville District. Steve Moore, after a full decade of the high country departed via transfer to the Redding District. E. Forbes Laflin spent nearly eight years with the District. He resigned his job to launch out for himself.

November 18, 1946 was marked as a day of sorrow for the District. Superintendent Curtis Warren was returning to Independence in the early evening from an inspection trip of maintenance operations in the Death Valley area. He had stopped at Panamint Springs for a cup of coffee and had chatted amiably with Howard Ellis and Jack Hopkins of Lone Pine. Leaving there he proceeded westerly up the winding road out of Panamint Valley. Ellis and Hopkins followed westerly about an hour or so later and saw Curtis' dog on the edge of the road. Investigation on the spot discovered the wrecked car and the dead body of Warren over the bank. Nothing was ever established to give a practical answer as to what actually occurred to cause the wreck.



*Fatal accident to Supt. Curtis Warren
Nov. 18, 1946*



*Maint. Sup't. Dwight Wonacott
At Scotty's Castle*

To fill the vacancy thus caused in the Independence territory Martin Nilius was certified off the civil service list from his job as Foreman at Buellton in Santa Barbara County.

The resumption of tourist traffic on the highways again after a long lull during the war years also served to awaken the Three Flags Highway Association to the benefits to be gained by actively promoting the east of the Sierras highway and inviting the tourist to tarry a while in the area. At the annual Three Flags Convention in Lakeview, Oregon, Douglas Joseph of Bishop was elected President and Howard Ellis of Bone Pine was put into the 3rd Vice President's chair. Gene Crosby of Paradise Camp was installed as a member of the Board of Directors of the Association.

After four years of practically no work on the existing highways and no new highway construction at all the State highway system had retrogressed to an alarming degree. The heavy influx of population in California due to war industries added to the highway congestion. The added volume of gas tax due to the increased volume of gas sales could not keep up with the decreasing value of the dollar. That something drastic and far reaching had to be done to highway financing was plainly evident. Chambers of Commerce, automobile clubs, industry, trucking associations and the State Legislature were becoming painfully aware that the financial structure of the Division of Highways needed overhauling.

An interim legislative committee was organized and really went to work on the problem. Experts in the fields of highway transportation and in highway financing were hired by the committee to study the field and to come up with a comprehensive workable plan for the future. Meetings of the committee were held all over the State to determine first hand the needs of the people.

A fatal accident occurred on August 15, 1946 about one and one half miles south of Big Pine which took the life of William Gray who was a passenger in a Chevrolet pickup truck driven by Assemblyman Thomas M. Erwin of Puente, California.

Other fatal accidents have occurred upon the State highway system but this one rates more than passing interest because of its aftermath. Mrs. Gray sued Spence Lowden and numerous others claiming a defective shoulder was knowingly allowed to exist. The suit was for \$150,000 and State wide publicity was given the case because of the well known assemblyman involved in the action. The case was tried at Independence in 1949 and resulted in a clearance of Spence and the Highway Department of any negligence.



*Homestead
Maint.
Station*

1933



1945



1945

The District Office at Bishop had two more small wings added to its hodge-podge layout to provide desk space for the Safety Engineer and more room for the Design Department.

COLLIER-BURNS

The year 1947 has been considered by many to contain the third most important highlight in California highway history. The first of course was the 1909 State Highway Bond issue which established the comprehensive State Highway System. The second occurred in 1923 when the State Legislature changed the method of financing State highway improvements to the "pay as you go" plan by levying a tax on gasoline.

The Legislature in 1947 passed the Collier-Burns Highway Act co-sponsored by Randolph Collier of Siskiyou County and Mike Burns of Humboldt County. This act was the consummation of an extensive and all inclusive study by independent engineers and highway economists under the direction of the Legislative Interim Committee of Highways, Roads, Streets and Bridges.

The reports covered traffic and financing studies of the entire California highway network, state routes, county roads and city streets and the recommendations for proposed development were all-inclusive.

The Collier-Burns Act as finally passed by the Legislature and approved by Governor Warren was a compromise based on the bill originally presented. However, the act followed in general the outlines of the committee's recommendations.

Tax on motor vehicle fuel was increased from three cents to four and one half cents per gallon and the net revenue derived from the tax is divided among the counties, cities and the state. Registration fees for automobiles were raised from \$3.00 to \$6.00 per year and weight taxes on trucks were increased proportionately. After the costs of administering the Department of Motor Vehicles and policing state highways are defrayed from the revenue derived from these sources the residue is transferred to the Highway Users Tax Fund for allocation between the counties and the state. Under the Collier-Burns Highway Act the net revenue from the 3% tax on the gross receipts of common carrier truck and bus operations is now directed into the State Highway Fund.

The provisions of the act allocate to the 58 counties for development of primary county roads $1\frac{3}{8}$ cents from the gas tax revenue plus a lump sum approximating five and one half million dollars annually; $\frac{5}{8}$ cent from the gas tax is apportioned to cities for use on major city streets other than state routes; and remaining revenue is allocated for state highway purposes.

Included in the Collier-Burns Act were provisions for the expenditure of specified percentages of construction and

right of way funds in each of the 58 counties. These so called "Mayo Amendments" made it mandatory that some funds be expended during each of the ensuing three 5-year periods in each of the counties and thus insured that all of the highway funds would not be spent in the major centers of population. By these amendments small counties like Inyo and Mono have been assured of a continued highway program.

Under the Collier-Burns Act the fiscal setup for the Division of Highways was changed from a biennial period to an annual period. This shift made the budgeting of state highway funds considerably more difficult and required a precise degree of coordination between consecutive budgets. No longer will it be feasible to budget large amounts, that is two to three million dollars, for complete projects, as it would be poor policy and inefficient administration to tie up funds in one year which would not be expended until the following year. However, through thorough and careful planning, with work on surveys, plans, specifications and right of way acquisition scheduled one, two, and three years ahead, smooth and continuing improvement will be accomplished.

To meet the greatly expanded state highway program under the 1947 act it was found advisable to reorganize the Division of Highways on a broader basis more adaptable to administration of the larger volume of work.

Complexities of highway planning and construction were such that the old style type of general engineering administration was no longer adequate. Each major administrative subdivision had reached the magnitude of the entire division of former days and each required an organization of specialists in its particular field.

With these requirements as a base, the headquarters staff was reorganized by making the Assistant State Highway Engineer Deputy State Highway Engineer and establishing positions for five assistant state highway engineers.

The work of the division was divided so that these assistant state highway engineers exercise executive authority over the following phases: Operations, administration, planning, and bridges. Upon an equal footing with these four major functions is right of way, under the Chief Right of Way Agent. The Fifth Assistant State Highway Engineer supervises personnel matters, prequalification of contractors, service agreements and miscellaneous other functions.

In right of way, under the Chief Right of Way Agent are two assistant agents one in charge of appraisals and the other administration and two assistant agents supervising right of way work in Northern California and Southern California respectively.

The two districts located in the metropolitan areas of San Francisco and Los Angeles, Districts IV and VII, are each headed by an Assistant State Highway Engineer. Under his direction is a District Engineer, operations, a District Engineer, administration and a metropolitan right of way agent.

The other nine districts were each put under the direction of a District Engineer with the functions also divided between operations, administration, and right of way.

In District IX, however, due to the still relatively small volume of all phases of highway work, the full rating of District Engineer was not granted to Spence Lowden. He was, however, appointed to the Supervising Highway Engineer rating on October 3, 1947 which was a full step up in civil service classification.

In connection with the legislative studies being made prior to the adoption of the Collier-Burns Highway Act the State Division of Highways made an extensive study and report on the deficiencies of the State Highway System. This report was released to the Legislative Interim Committee and was later published officially in the Senate Journal. For District IX this study brought to light deficiencies of one kind or another which totaled \$9,281,000. Of this total \$2,262,000 were in Inyo County, \$5,155,000 in eastern Kern County and \$1,864,000 in Mono County.

The highway maintenance forces had a relatively easier time of it during the winter of 46-47 since the snow pack was considerably lighter than usual. The Mammoth Road was opened in late March an almost unheard of early opening. Sonora Pass was opened May 17 and Tioga Pass on May 24, 1947.

February 6, 1947 saw the passing from the mortal earth of Francis G. Somner in San Francisco at the advanced age of 84 years. Frank had nearly fifteen years of well earned retirement since he last appeared on District IX's payroll. His wife, son and both of his daughters survived him.

Special legislation in the 1947 session which was of especial interest to the people of the desert areas saw the inclusion of additional roads into the State highway system. These roads formed a continuous route through three counties starting at Route 23 near Freeman Junction and running easterly across Kern, San Bernardino and Inyo Counties to the Nevada State line near Pahrump. This route known now as Route 212 is in reality a continuation easterly of the Walker Pass highway and as a whole comprises portions of the Cross Country Highway from Kingman Arizona to Morro Bay, California. The Cross Country Highway Association, which is and has been actively promoting this route, is and has been ably and optimistically headed by Josh Clarke of Bakersfield.



Terrain involved in easterly extension of Route 212



Cross Country Highway

Route 212 joins Route 23 three miles north of Freeman Junction, passes through Inyokern and Ridgecrest, skirts the Naval Ordnance Test Station, follows through Salt Wells Canyon and comes to a temporary stop near the West End Chemical Company's plant. Easterly over Searles Lake, the Slate Range, through Panamint Valley, over the Panamint Mountains and halfway through Death Valley there is no road. One might reasonably say that even the jackrabbits avoid this area. The Jubilee Pass road in Death Valley connects with the Salsbury Pass portion of Route 212 which brings the traveler into Shoshone and thence easterly to Nevada.

The gap of approximately 43 miles in the middle of Route 212 has never been built because of several reasons. The rugged terrain and the high cost for the small amount of expected traffic represents a solid financial reason. The Navy has a firing range in this area which effectively stops the less expensive and better route than that which would attempt to climb and descend both the Slate and Panamint Ranges.

By the inclusion of Route 212 into the State highway system a total of 125.528 miles was added to the mileage of the District. However of this new total 43 miles were completely unbuilt and 17 miles were within the boundary of Death Valley National Monument and in this case were maintained by the Monument authorities so that only 65.528 miles were actually added to the maintained mileage of the District.

District wide there were now 913.874 miles under highway maintenance.

Highway construction took a new lease on life during the year 1947 but still there was little to the type of work done other than repairs to the existing roads.

Browne & Krull took on a \$17,532 project for placing a repair blanket of road mixed surfacing at three different locations. These locations consisted of areas on West Line Street in Bishop, North of Laws on U.S. 6 and easterly from U.S. 6 and 395 on the Death Valley Road and totaled 3.2 miles in all. Paul Evans, Dennis Bouch and Richard L. Hood did the inspection for the State.

Ted Smith took on a residency for revamping the highway at Shoshone. A. A. Edmondson was the contractor on this 0.71 mile job for grading and road mixing for which he was paid \$26,428. C. R. Hagberg and Lou Rohrer helped Ted out on this job.

The Bishop Engineering and Construction Company took on a 2-1/2 mile project to build some property fence from Laws to the Mono County line for which they received \$4,910. Paul Evans and Dennis Bouch witnessed the setting of the posts and the stretching of the wire. This project was instigated to fulfill a right of way agreement with the City of Los Angeles.

The 2.8 miles of highway from Point Ranch to Bridgeport in Mono County were repaired by adding a 6" layer of imported gravel and then topping it off with a 3" road mixed surfacing blanket under a contract let to George E. France. This project cost \$40,172 and was field engineered by Harvey Porter, assisted by W. W. Wiltsee and O. E. Ferguson.

Two repair jobs were done on U.S. 466 east of Mojave which were adjacent to each other. Basich Brothers underbid all others on each of the projects. Clyde Gates was also the resident on each job assisted by Richard Rogers, Warren Meacham, Allen Wilkerson and on the easterly job by Glenn Compton also. The project from 12 miles east of Mojave to Muroc Junction cost \$145,320 for the 4.98 miles and in addition to a 3" plant mixed blanket included some grading and some imported base material. From Muroc Junction to 6.5 miles easterly a two inch blanket of plant mixed surfacing cost the State \$29,867.

The highway through or around June Lake Village was in real need of straightening out and Spence had organized a survey and secured authority to purchase the required right of way. Two things conspired to relegate this project to the round file department. In the first instance the cost of real property went suddenly upward with the approach of Serge Ray and his right of way contracts. Secondly the property owners themselves banded together and sent a petition signed by more than 100 of them to the Sacramento office urging that the present June Lake Loop road be left where it was. Needless to say with that sort of a reception to a new road Spence's plans took an immediate change and the funds were transferred elsewhere.

The District Staff lost only two permanent personnel during the year 1947 and took on ten new faces. As of the first day of 1947 Roy Johnson was put back on the Fresno District's payroll from whence he came during the war years.

The other loss came about by the transfer of District Maintenance Engineer Jim Hodges to Headquarters Office on August 1st. Jim had spent six and one half fruitful years in working with and organizing the work of the maintenance crews through the difficult war years.

To carry on the maintenance functions as District Maintenance Engineer the Assistant District Maintenance Engineer from the Stockton District was certified to the position and thus Joseph R. Jarvis came to the land east of the Sierras. Joe fell in love with the area at once and the area returned its affection.

The ranks of the field engineers were increased and enhanced by the addition of eight energetic and alert young men. Howard Emrich came to California from Maryland. Vaughn Marker and Harvey Porter came to the District on transfer from the

Fresno District. Gene Snyder, Dick Waters, Allen Wilkerson, Fred Allanbaugh and Jimmy Gray were added to the staff from off civil service eligible lists.

Esther Webb first showed herself around the District in May of 1947 when she was hired to do the leg work of getting and taking the mail, routing papers around the office and looking after the stationery room. Part time typing fell to her lot at times also.

A prefabricated barracks type building was erected just east of the main building for the purpose of supplying much needed office space for drafting room employees. Another similar barracks type building was erected east of the Shop building for the storage of tires, batteries and other Shop inventory items.

DISTRICT GROWS IN STATURE

Recognition of the District and of the efforts of Spencer W. Lowden was received when in January of 1948 authority was given to eliminate the word "Acting" from Spence's working title. Henceforth he was known officially as the District Engineer. No increase in salary or civil service status was awarded to Spence but the personal satisfaction for the recognition of a job well done was of considerable gratification to him.

George Savage, the newspaper tycoon who had purchased the Inyo Register from W. A. Chalfant, eventually sold out his interests to other parties. A break for the Inyo-Mono region occurred with the announcement in January 1948 of the appointment of George to the position of secretary to the California Highway Commission. George's intimate knowledge of this region was to prove of inestimable value to the area in acquainting the Commissioners with the state of affairs in the Land of Little Rain. Then, too, in addition to talking about the area George was able to actually bring some of the Commissioners to the area in person to view conditions and to see the country which George Savage loved so well. Specifically, Harrison Baker accompanied George into the area in June and spoke at community gatherings during the period of nearly a week that he sojourned in the area. In September George Savage brought Chester Warlow to Inyo-Mono for a visit with civic groups and inspection of highway affairs.

The weather cooperated splendidly during the winter of 47-48 giving the maintenance crews a bit of a respite from previous heavy snow removal operations.

The McGee Creek maintenance crew had its Sunday siesta shattered due to a large rock slide in Rock Creek Canyon. Always it seems as if these spectacular affairs occur on a weekend to further harry the already harrassed maintenance forces. Just one huge boulder was the cause of this episode but it brought with it tons of smaller rocks and completely blocked the highway just north of Sherwin Summit on the Sunday nearest to the Independence Day holiday. Traffic was heavy and during the 2-1/4 hours that it took Foreman Roy Wells and his crew to clear the road better than 250 cars were lined up in the July heat. The popping off of the 28 sticks of dynamite required to split the boulder into smaller boulders so that they could be pushed over the bank into Rock Creek provided unanticipated pyrotechnics for the sweltering tourists awaiting opening of a one way road through the slide.

While on the subject of maintenance operations it should be here recorded that Joe Jarvis' tenure as Maintenance Engineer came to a rather sudden ending in August when as a

result of his splendid actions as Maintenance Engineer, coupled with his long background of maintenance experience in the Stockton District, he was asked to transfer to District XI at San Diego to take over the reins of maintenance replacing Pete Comly, retired. Joe and his family were extremely reluctant to leave Bishop but he was faithful to his charge and went where his duty and destiny lay.

Joe's successor came from off the civil service list in the person of Merle E. Fischer. Merle's maintenance background was confined entirely to bridge maintenance and since he had been employed entirely by the Bridge Department from the day he graduated from Stanford University his knowledge of highway operations from the District's angle was extremely limited. However, Merle had an unlimited amount of energy and curiosity and coupled with a keen sense of humor he soon adapted himself and was in turn adopted by the District.

Construction activities picked up this season but not so much from the volume of work done as from the fact that only one project was an out and out repair job. All of the balance of the contracts awarded in 1948 contributed something to the improvement and modernization of the system.

The repair job was a long deferred project to repair the washouts in Red Rock Canyon resulting from the October 1945 cloudburst runoffs. Westbrook & Pope were paid \$34,697 for making these embankment repairs over the 0.47 mile of damaged roadbed. C. R. Hagberg was the resident engineer aided by Fred Allenbaugh, Jimmy Gray and Dan Indermuhl.

The Oilfields Trucking Company and the Phoenix Construction Company of Bakersfield were paid \$148,991 for grading and placing plant mixed surfacing over four locations totaling 11.5 miles between Mojave and the District boundary at the San Bernardino County line. The most significant portion of this project was the major improvement through the town of Boron. Harvey Porter was the resident engineer assisted by Richard Rogers, Gene Snyder, W. W. Wiltsee, Norman Jewell and Lawrence Paglia.

One of the biggest jobs in the District was taken on by Basich Brothers when they were paid \$221,431 for the 4.32 miles of realignment of Route 23 around the Alabama Gates and northerly to Manzanar. Besides grading a new roadbed and placing thereon a base course and a plant mixed surfacing course this project included a new bridge over the Los Angeles aqueduct. Harvey Porter was the resident on this job before he left for the Oilfields Contract on U.S. 466. Helping Harvey were Richard Rogers, Emery Kennedy, Allen Wilkerson and Gene Snyder. Jack Sylvester represented the Bridge Department with assistance from Francis Morrill.

A modicum of attention was paid to the Mono Mills cross road this season with the award of a \$47,243 project to the Oilfields Trucking Company and the Phoenix Construction Company combine to apply a 2" bituminous surface treatment to the existing roadbed material over a 16 mile length of this road between Sheep Corral and Adobe Creek. Ted Smith aided by W. W. Wiltsee looked after the State's interests.

Ted Smith and Wiltsee with reinforcements consisting of Jimmy Gray, Marvin Nelligan and Marvin Tetrick took over the engineering on Westbrook & Pope's 2.18 mile contract for changing the highway scenery along the westerly shore of Topaz Lake. Officially termed from 7 miles north of Coleville to State Line, this project for grading and road mixed surfacing netted the contractors \$119,196.

In 1940 a contract for grading and placing a road mixed surfacing was completed between the East Gate to Yosemite National Park and Lake Ellery. This project at the Tioga Pass summit is the highest State highway in California. Consequently it is also under a blanket of snow longer than most highways but during its short summer season it receives a large volume of tourist traffic which in turn witnesses some of the most scenic grandeur in the world.

At this high altitude and under adverse winter conditions the original road mixed surfacing over practically no base material took a continued pounding. In 1948 it was deemed necessary to give some relief to this road and a major day labor project under Superintendent Chuck Carter was organized to cement treat the existing material to serve as a base and to add a new road mixed surfacing to the revitalized base. This was the first cement treated base project attempted in the District and the troubles always encountered in anything new were multiplied by the very isolation of the project and the high altitude, (Tioga Pass reaches an elevation of 9950') which very materially reduced the efficiency of both men and machinery. The base was completed before the snow fell that fall. The surfacing was necessarily withheld until the summer of 1949 for its completion. A three inch cement treated thickness plus a three inch surfacing was obtained for the \$56,211 that this 2.5 mile project cost. Vaughn Marker was the engineer in charge of the work. John Van Dyck, the maintenance foreman at Leevining, was in direct charge of the State forces.

Three of the staunchest pillars of the District were pulled down this year with the transfer of three of the engineers with the longest District IX careers. January 1, 1948 witnessed the departure of Paul E. Evans to San Luis Obispo where he took on the full time duties as District Materials Engineer. Paul represented a personal history of all of District IX's construction program during the ~~18-1/2~~ years that he was in the

District. As either inspector, resident engineer or laboratory man he probably had a better personal knowledge of what happened on the various contract projects than any other of the District's personnel. Paul was also responsible for the beginning of the District Laboratory.

Six months later Dennis Bouch severed nineteen years of service in the desert and in the mountains to transfer to District XI at San Diego. Dennis' name is likewise to be found on a very heavy percentage of the contract projects including several of which he handled as resident engineer.

Sidney Silver's fourteen years in District IX were spent primarily in the drafting room and on right of way office work although he did at times get in his innings as a construction inspector and a survey party member. Sidney transferred to the San Francisco District.

Vaughn Marker accumulated only one year's experience in passing through the District on his way to Headquarters Office Construction Department. On leaving the District he took as his bride the popular daughter of one of Bishop's leading druggists, Barbara Mandich.

Howard Emrich resigned his job in March to go to work for the Mono County Road Department at Bridgeport.

Etta Harris resigned her job in June for the express purpose of changing her name from Etta Harris to Etta Newman.

The six years that Clyde Gates spent in the District both on construction and in the District Laboratory stood him in good stead when an opening occurred at Headquarters Laboratory at Sacramento. Clyde and family moved to Sacramento in June of 1948.

Frank Faulkner completed the list of transferees from the District in December when he transferred to San Diego after eleven years of report and personnel record keeping in the Bishop office.

Proof that the District was growing up came in August with the assignment of another first line assistant to the District Engineer. Up to now Spence had had only one Senior Engineer to help out with the multitude of affairs which was the Maintenance Engineer. An enormous load was lifted from Spence's shoulders with the assignment of a Construction Engineer. Previously the myriad details which go along with contract construction were a part of the District Engineer's duties. This new Construction Engineer turned out to be Jacob Dekema whose past highway experience had been limited almost exclusively to Bridge Department activities. Such activities were, however,

not entirely incompatible with his new duties and he soon took the full burden of the Construction Department's activities away from Spence. Jake, in spite of an initial foreboding because of his lantern jaw and naval demeanor, soon became a personal hit with the office personnel.

Engineers recruited via the civil service lists this year included Bob Fisher from Independence, Leon Lay from Big Pine, Norman Jewell of Bishop, Bill Coons and left-footed Danny Winona. Fred Duggan was put to work in the drafting room making fancy drawings. William Kip was transferred in from the Fresno District to assume resident engineer's responsibilities. The two Marvins came to work as budding engineers this season - Marvin Tetrick came from Compton College while Marvin Nelligan was a local Bishop product.

Jane McAfee was hired to run the bookkeeping machine and to do other accounting work as required in the District's Accounting Room under the eagle eye of Jim Joyce.

George Seibert's term of office as Shop 9 Superintendent came to an end in April at which time he was promoted to head of Shop 7 at North Hollywood. William J. Millard was imported to keep things moving at the Bishop Shop.

A quonset hut was assembled on the rear of the District premises for the headquarters of the District road signing and traffic striping activities. Chester Squires was in charge of these operations for the District.

By now there was little space on the District lot which was not taken up by some building or another and no room was available for storage or expansion. In addition a fire starting on the lot was a sure bet to sweep through the entire layout so closely were the buildings spaced. In anticipation of future expansion the corner lot area directly west of the District Office and on the opposite side of the highway was purchased outright (except for water rights) from the City of Los Angeles.

POST WAR PEAK

The post war peak in east of the Sierras construction activities was reached in 1949 with the award of fifteen individual State highway contracts. In addition to these jobs there were several hold over contracts which were started in the previous year which all added up to a feverish field activity on the part of the Construction Department and of course when completed provided the traveling public with many more miles of excellent highways upon which to tour. The contracts let in 1949 were unique in that they covered all types of construction.

On the smallest yet of major interest was the \$14,200 contract to the Peterson Construction Company of Monrovia for placing rock backfill bank protection and torpedo netting along the areas in Red Rock Canyon which were washed out in the floods of 1945 and subsequently repaired under contract in 1948. Dick Rogers and Gene Snyder did the State inspection work. Since that date only a trickle of water has run through Red Rock Canyon and so there are still many conjectures as to whether or not the netting will be effective in holding fast against the cutting action of flash flood waters.

The first formal channelized intersection was put together north of Mojave where U.S. 466 and U.S. 6 intersect. This intersection treatment was combined with a resurfacing of the highway south for 0.8 mile into Mojave under a \$35,943 contract awarded to Davis & Swartz. Dick Rogers and Fred Thompson were residents and Dan Winona, Chuck Carter, Jr. and Jimmy Gray lent their talents to the project also.

In the town of Mojave itself a small contract was awarded to the G & H Paving Company for placing 0.44 mile mile of metal plate guard rail between the main street area of Mojave and the Southern Pacific-Santa Fe railroad station grounds. This project was done as a safety measure to parked cars and pedestrians as the two areas were wide open and susceptible to accidents from promiscuous wandering. Entrances to the railroad areas were thus controlled and funneled. Dick Rogers and Gene Snyder looked after the details on this \$6,415 contract.

Out east of Mojave on U.S. 466 the G & H Paving Company was awarded a \$14,750 contract for placing a screenings seal coat on the 11.5 mile plant mixed surfacing project which was constructed the previous year by the Oilfields Trucking Company. This seal coat was over four separate locations and was engineered by Dick Rogers with assistance from Jimmy Gray, Norman Jewell, Marvin Tetrick, Chuck Carter Jr. and R. B. Rice.

At several locations which added up to 5.67 miles, Miles & Bailey of Madera ~~contracted to~~ straighten out numerous

curves, widen the roadbed and oil treat the surface between Chimney Creek and Walker Pass. They collected \$46,194 for their very excellent work. Fred Thompson saw to it that it was excellently done and in this respect he had help from Jimmy Gray, Allen Wilkerson, Howard Call and Norman Jewell.

Over on U.S. 395 north of Johannesburg and out in the desert Clyde W. Wood Inc. of North Hollywood received \$33,259 for grading and roadmixing 2.26 miles at two locations between Randsburg Road and Searles Road. William Kip was the resident engineer aided by Norman Jewell and Allen Wilkerson.

A road mixed blanket was placed over the newly acquired Route 212 from the main gate of the Naval Ordnance Test Station south and east to the San Bernardino County line, a distance of four miles. The Rand Construction Company was paid \$22,658 for their work. Gene Snyder got his first taste of being a resident engineer and received help from Marvin Tetrick and Dick Waters.

Dick Rogers took on another residency to fill out a very full year when he was assigned to look after an 18.95 mile seal coat project which was awarded to Davis & Swartz of Bakersfield. The \$19,348 project included two spots between Mojave and Freeman and one location east of Mojave on U.S. 466. Marvin Tetrick, Dick Rice and Norman Jewell lent their assistance.

The only project awarded in 1949 for work in Mono County was for shoulder and pavement repair on U.S. 6 at nine locations between the Inyo County line and Benton Station. Arthur Johnson received \$57,657 for this repair work and William Kip was the State's engineer assisted by Jimmy Gray, Douglas Thorman, Dick Rice, Byron Coke and Chuck Carter, Jr.

In and about Bishop considerable trouble had developed due to an inadequate drainage system. To do its part the State let a contract to the Bishop Engineering & Construction Company for correcting such of the situation as was the State's responsibility. Besides numerous drainage pipes and ditches this project included a major structure over China Slough at the south limits of Bishop. The contractor collected \$44,187 for this 0.36 mile project. Emery Kennedy was the resident engineer with aid from Allen Wilkerson, Marvin Tetrick and Howard Call.

The Oilfields Trucking Company & Phoenix Construction Company undertook to build 18.12 miles of 5' road mixed shoulders at seven locations between 1-1/4 miles south of Lone Pine and Bishop. The project netted them \$55,402 from the State. Fred Thompson did the engineering with the help of Dick Waters, Arthur Jenkins, Dick Rice and Bruce Packard.

Funds were made available for the construction of a truckshed and a gas and ~~oil house~~ at the Shoshone Maintenance

Station and so it was that Fred D. Kyle was paid \$7,650 for such work under a formal contract. Walter Weidman was the resident engineer since it was a maintenance project and Walter was working in the maintenance office.

R. A. Irwin of Colton was low bidder on the 7.09 mile project from Soda Plant to 8 miles south on the Death Valley highway for grading and placing road mixed surfacing. He received the sum of \$80,815 for his work. Finis N. (Bob) Roberts was the resident engineer with help from Dan Winona, Art Jenkins and Bob Fisher. A peculiar financial happening occurred in connection with this project. The low bidder was so far under the engineers' estimate that enough money was left in the budget allocation to allow for the extension of the project through the medium of another advertised contract. Rice Brothers bid low for the 5.4 mile extension westerly from the Soda Plant to the Southern Pacific Railroad crossing west of Keeler. For their grading and surfacing project Rice Brothers were paid \$90,422. Bob Roberts was also the resident engineer aided and abetted by Bob Kelly, Bob Fisher, Art Jenkins, Dan Winona, Don Polson and Howard Call. The uniqueness of the financing of this project stems from the fact that almost without exception projects which show a savings at the bid opening have these savings thrown back into the general coffers for financing those projects which overrun the engineers' estimates.

The Mathews Excavating Company collected \$45,068 for construction of a reinforced concrete box culvert at the Lower McNally Canal on U.S. 6 north of Laws and for building a steel beam bridge over the Owens River near Laws to replace the old 1931 county built bridge. W. R. Douglas was the Bridge Department resident engineer on these structures.

A 4600 to 1 chance on a goldfish bowl drawing on the Kaiser-Frazer "Meet the People" radio program in New York City on Saturday, January 1, 1949, turned up "Bishop, California." That meant almost instantly that some local owner of a Kaiser or Frazer in Bishop would receive an airplane trip to New York for himself and his wife with all expenses paid. Tuesday evening the names of all Kaiser or Frazer owners in this area were placed in a hat. A citizens committee met at the Bishop Chamber of Commerce office and Mayor Clarence Cleman drew the names. Claude Beesly was the first name drawn. S. Lewis Rohrer second; Jim Ayres third and Dan Moore fourth. After considerable pondering Beesley decided that he and his wife could not make the trip; Lew and Helen Rohrer, who came to Bishop in 1945 after more than three years of imprisonment in the Los Banos and Santo Tomas Japanese prison camps in the Philippines accepted the honor and left by plane for New York and in due time appeared on the national network program.

The Federal Aid Secondary program had been moving ahead satisfactorily in both Inyo and Mono counties. All projects



*Bridgeport
County Seat of Mono County*

undertaken in each county were performed on county roads as originally contemplated. Mono County together with Alpine County got together and arranged to pool their Federal Aid Secondary resources to push a road through the mountains between Coleville and Markleeville, thus providing for a road entirely within California and joining the two county seats. This project was put underway in its first stages in 1949 by a Federal Aid Secondary contract.

It may be remembered that District IX carried on its books an as yet unbuilt road from a point south of Coleville to Markleeville. The infant joint county road program took off of U. S. 395 some ten miles further north than the paper route which the State recognized. However since the two counties appeared to be making substantial progress in grading a road and since it appeared doubtful that the State would ever get around to building their road, the California Highway Commission told the two counties that if and when they got their road built to F.A.S. standards then the State would take it over in lieu of their non-existent road, place base and surfacing materials and assume all future maintenance of the route. This acted as a stimulant to the counties which then had some hope of getting a road opened up in this wild and high country.

Tioga Pass was opened on May 28th.

Personnel losses on the staff payroll were relatively light this year with only four of the faithful giving up their District IX citizenship. Naomi (Susie) Emrick carried with her to Headquarters Lab in Sacramento the most seniority by reason of her five years of association with the highways at Bishop.

Richard Rogers resigned at the end of September for personal reasons it being generally assumed that all was not serene on his homefront. Rynard Bergman transferred to Headquarters Office after 2-1/4 years in the District Drafting Room. Bergman was genuinely well liked by all who came in contact with him but his health was such that he just couldn't take it up in the high country.

Harvey Porter returned to his native area at Fresno after 1-1/2 years as a resident engineer.

From an administrative standpoint the most important addition to the District was that of the addition of John H. Creed to the staff payroll as a Senior Highway Engineer in charge of Design. After all of the years that Spence had to carry the load singlehanded, except for a maintenance engineer, and now to acquire not only a construction engineer but also a design engineer was almost too much for Spence. John came from Redding District where he had been a resident engineer on numerous projects involving all sorts of construction work so

that he brought to the District a solid background of highway work and procedures. John had also served time in the Eureka and San Francisco Districts.

Increase in actual construction as well as in design and survey work aimed at the future required more manpower and so Spence went out and found the men. Don Polson transferred in from Fresno; Leon Hughes came from Los Angeles; Howard Call transferred in from Fresno. The civil service lists produced Shirley Swan from the University of Southern California; Byron Coke from the University of California at Los Angeles; Chester Wilson from University of California at Los Angeles; Lillard T. McDonald, Bob Kelly and Charles Jackson from the University of California, Berkeley. Chuck Carter, Jr., son of the Crestview Superintendent, Art Jenkins of Big Pine and Rod Buchan all came to work this summer. George Gray started a summer vacation career with District IX this summer.

Three new stenographers were added to the payroll: Lilly Kelly in the Right of Way section; Nina Gable in the Report Department and Theresa Clark in the Traffic Department. To replace Faulkner in the Report Department Spence reached over to Sacramento and brought Flossie Woodward to Bishop. Flossie took over flawlessly but interrupted things when she met a young man in the Fish and Game Department by the name of Del Ashabrunner. Woodward is gone but Ashabrunner continues to run the Report Department.

Shop 9 changed titular heads again in December when Bill Millard was transferred to Shop 4 and Freeman L. (Happy) Vacher was promoted from Shop 7 to fill the vacancy.

The year 1949 was the centennial year of Death Valley and the first week end in December was set aside for an historical pageant of mammoth and even colossal proportions to commemorate the discovery of the valley. The weather collaborated splendidly and on the appointed weekend the highways leading to the valley were literally choked with cars. No actual count could be taken but so thick were the cars that they proceeded at a snail's pace once they reached the valley floor. Those who started late for the festival never did reach the pageant grounds so great was the traffic jam.

At the same time the Jayhawker Trail was officially dedicated at ceremonies held at Valley Wells near Trona. The historical monument was dedicated by James Guthrie, San Bernardino publisher and member of the California Highway Commission.

SPENCE IS PROMOTED

Events occurring during the early part of 1950 gave forth an exceedingly familiar ring without any semblance of a hint that this was to be a year of significance in the annals of District IX.

The winter was generally mild and the skiing was good on Mammoth Mountain. The interests of Leevining and of Hawthorne, Nevada were centered on bringing the Pole Line Road up to a travelable standard. The citizens of Mono County banded together and at a March meeting at the Mammoth Elementary School formed a county wide Chamber of Commerce. The Coleville-Markleeville Road was actually put under construction. Mono County started work on the Minaret Summit Road. Tioga Pass opened on May 28th.

The Lone Pine to Porterville road project was reactivated again at least insofar as the talking was concerned. A policy of "Keep Hammering Away" was adopted at a joint meeting of the proponents of the road.

Eight State highway contracts were awarded this season and work was pushed on future projects through the medium of surveys and drafting room work.

Two particularly flat curves were operated upon at Black Rock and at Aberdeen in order to provide them with sufficient banking or superelevation to allow for full speed around them. This work cost \$13,853 and included sufficient approach work to total 2.76 miles in the contract won by E. C. Young & Company. Bob Fisher was the resident engineer aided by Jimmy Gray, Byron Coke, Marvin Nelligan and Marvin Tetrick.

Marvin Tetrick was resident engineer and had Bob Fisher and Byron Coke, plus Dan Winona and Norman Jewell on Halloran & Gill's 2.43 mile contract for grading and shoulders between Little Lake and three miles north. The contractors were paid \$21,153 for their services on this project.

A much needed structural project was completed under a 6.1 mile contract to Harms Brothers for cement treating 6" of material with cement and adding a 3" plant mixed surfacing on the north approach to Conway Summit from Bodie Road. Prior to this stabilization this section provided real trouble every wet winter due to the bottom literally chopping out of the road. Harms Brothers collected \$125,992 for their work. Bill Coons was the resident engineer assisted by Dick Waters, Leon Lay, Marvin Tetrick, Charles Jackson, Bob Fisher and Rod Buchan.

Harms Brothers were also the low bidders on a 9.3 mile shoulder project from a point south of Coleville to Topaz Lake.

One line change and some curve superelevation work were done in addition to the shoulders and the surfacing which were placed for the \$56,507 involved. Gene Snyder with help from Frank (Shirly) Swan, Doug Thorman, Marvin Nelligan, Norman Jewell and Howard Call did the State's engineering.

Westbrook & Pope collected \$24,573 for grading and surfacing the north connection of the June Lake Loop. This 1.46 mile project from Grant Lake to Route 23 was in charge of William Kip and Marvin Tetrick as resident engineers with added help coming from Frank Swan, Rod Buchan, Don Polson, Leon Lay, Jimmy Gray and Chet Wilson.

Bob Roberts kept a watchful eye on Ralph Ellis, who was now running the G. W. Ellis Construction Company in connection with their \$143,204 contract for surfacing eight miles of highway south of Mojave and placing of 5' shoulders on the entire section from the Los Angeles County line to Mojave. In addition shoulders were placed at three locations north of Mojave and south of Freeman Junction. All in all work was done over 23.2 miles of highway. L. T. McDonald, Don Polson, Bob Kelly, Dan Winona and Chuck Carter Jr. helped Bob with the inspection and book work.

Bob Kelly had a job of his own when he was assigned to the E. C. Young & Company contract for grading and road mixed surfacing between Searles Road and Rademacher. This 3.29 mile project paid the contractor \$33,093. Kelly had assistance at various times and in varying amounts from Charles Jackson, Art Jenkins, Byron Coke, Leon Hughes, Marvin Nelligan, Dan Winona, Marvin Tetrick and L. T. McDonald.

The last job done in 1950 was the 14.78 mile contract on the Cross Country Highway, Route 212, from the Kern County line to 5.5 miles east of Salt Wells in San Bernardino County. The State paid \$121,056 to the Oilfields Trucking Company & Phoenix Construction Company for the regrading and road mixed surfacing of this section of highway. Fred Thompson was the resident engineer assisted by Jimmy and George Gray, Dan Winona, Chuck Carter Jr., Marvin Tetrick, Leon Lay and Fred Allenbaugh.

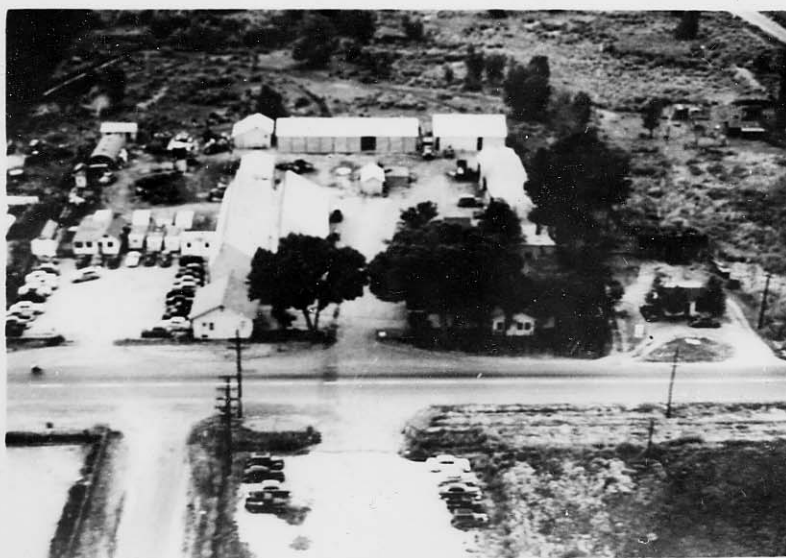
Marvin Tetrick had an exceedingly busy year as the records show that he was employed at some time on six of this year's eight contracts and that on two of the six he was the resident engineer in charge of seeing that the work was done according to specifications.

What looked like the start of another armed conflict involving the nations of the world made a start in June with the outbreak of hostilities in Korea. No immediate drastic effects were felt in the highway field but a general tightening up in manpower, materials and regulations began to slowly make itself felt. Marvin Nelligan was the first to enter service of Uncle Sam in this period.



DIST IX YARD

*DISTRICT IX HEADQUARTERS
1950*



DIST IX YARD

The first nine months of 1950 seemed to witness nothing but losses in the District's forces. Allen Wilkerson transferred to District V at San Luis Obispo. William Kip resigned for personal reasons and Howard Call transferred back to Fresno. Art Jenkins resigned to go into business for himself. Lillard McDonald resigned in September to go back to Tennessee. Byron Coke waived his military leave and resigned to go into service.

Albert McCarton went on voluntary retirement as of August 31, 1950 after sixteen and one half years in the Bishop District. As of the time for Mac's retirement he was serving the District as its Traffic Engineer. His State highway service dated clear back to 1915 so that it was with genuine good will that those left behind in the District wished Mac a happy retirement period. Glenn Compton took over the Traffic Engineer's job upon Mac's retirement.

Lucile Adams made her entrance into the District in June doing stenographic and typing work in the Accounting Room. Edward (Dusty) Rhoades came to work in the District Laboratory from the Headquarters Laboratory Branch in the oilfields at Bakersfield.

In May of 1950 there came out a formal announcement from the State Personnel Board of a promotional examination to be held in June for the position of Principal Highway Engineer which is the normal equivalent of the District Engineer's job. Spence Lowden signed up and took this written examination. In due course he was called up before the qualifications appraisal board in August. A week later he was advised that he had passed the entire examination high up on the list of eligibles.

Due to the fact that the work in the District had increased not only in volume but in complexities as well, it was generally thought in lay circles that Spence would acquire the new rating here in Bishop as a reward for seventeen years of successful running of the District. However, due to the retirement of E. Q. Sullivan as District Engineer at San Bernardino there was a vacancy at this location. So well had Spence done his job at Bishop that his reward was to be in bigger fields and more responsible locations. The position at San Bernardino offered to Spence a challenge too big to turn down even though Spence was attaining that period in life's span when more important things such as an easy chair and a roaring fire begin to take up an ever increasing part of one's daily routine.

The friendships and family ties accumulated after seventeen years in Bishop were not easy to break. Spence's son Earl and two grandchildren were in Bishop but both of his daughters had left the area, Pat being in San Francisco and Margaret in Reno. There was a great deal of sincere regret on Spence's part in leaving Bishop as indeed there was on the part

of the people of Bishop and of all of Inyo and Mono Counties. Spence was an ardent Rotarian, an active Elk, having served as Exalted Ruler of the Bishop Lodge in 1944, and very much interested in the California State Guard, besides retaining his Masonic and Eastern Star ties.

Upon the occasion of his promotion to San Bernardino a testimonial dinner was held at the Bishop Elks building. Besides the attendance of the highway employees, friends from Mono County and from all over Owens Valley and even Ray Goodwin from Death Valley arrived to wish Spence God speed and success at his new stand. Chairman John Lubken of the Inyo County Board of Supervisors expressed a general sentiment when he remarked that the Board of Supervisors was losing its sixth member.

At the time of Spence's departure he had arranged the District Staff personnel so that they were organized in the following manner:

Merle E. Fischer	District Maintenance Engineer
W. L. Savage	Assistant Dist. Mtc. Engr.
Walter Weidman	Maintenance Department Office
Robert S. Hopkins	Radio Technician
John H. Creed	District Design Engineer
Wm. R. Coons	Chief Draftsman
Dorothy Bright	Squad Leader
Fred Duggan	Delineator
Leon Hughes	Draftsman
Ted Smith	Draftsman
Chester Wilson	Draftsman
Lillian Meacham	Blueprints - Files
O. Glenn Compton	District Traffic Engineer
Serge Ray	District Right of Way Agent
Emery Kennedy	District Safety Supervisor
S. Lewis Rohrer	District Materials Engineer
Edward Rhoades	Laboratory Assistant
James L. Joyce	Chief Clerk
Mary Conn	Senior Account Clerk
Lucile Adams	Stenographer
Dorothy Dixon	Personnel Clerk
Martha Evers	Senior Account Clerk
Jane McAfee	Bookkeeping Machine Operator
Dorothy Vellom	Secretary to District Engineer
Esther Webb	Mail Clerk
Theresa Clark	Typist
Nina Gable	Stenographer
Lilly Kelly	Stenographer
Flossie Ashabranner	Report Department
Jacob Dekema	District Construction Engineer

Rod Buchan, Charles Carter Jr., Carrol Coons, Robert Fisher, George Gray, Jimmy Gray, Charles Jackson, Norman Jewell, Bob Kelly, Leon Lay, Marvin Nelligan, Don Polson, Bob Roberts,



D. VELLOM



E. WEBB



N. GABLE



T. CLARK



L. KELLY



D. DIXON



JOYCE



L. ADAMS



M. EVERS



M. CONN



J. MCSAFEE



F. ASHABRANNER



DEKEMA



RHOADES



RAY



G. COMPTON



SAVAGE



FISCHER



WEIDMAN



HOPKINS



CARTER
CRESTVIEW



HOLT
MOJAVE



NILIUS
INDEPENDENCE



SAVAGE



FISCHER



WEIDMAN



HOPKINS



CARTER
CRESTVIEW



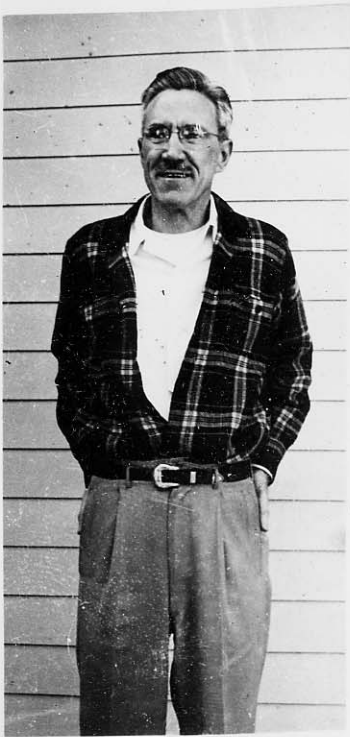
HOLT
MOJAVE



NILIUS
INDEPENDENCE



CREED



DUGGAN



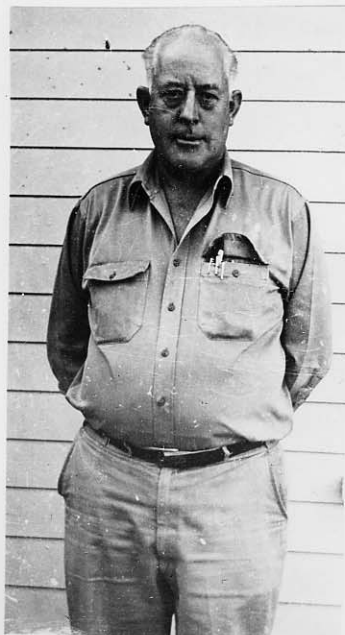
L. MEACHAM



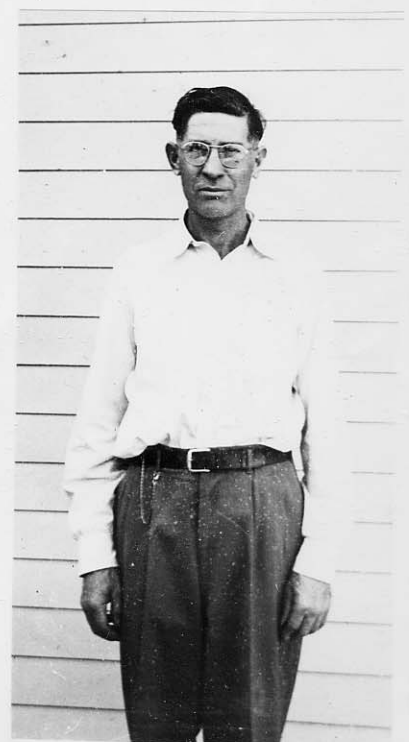
D. BRIGHT



WILSON



SMITH



HUGHES

Gene Snyder, Frank Swan, Marvin Tetrick, Doug Thorman, Dick Waters, Dan Winona and Lillard McDonald - all field engineers.

The Staff payroll accounted for 50 personnel. Tom Dorville was on the payroll for general utility work such as watchman, gardner, boiler operator, relief janitor and all around handy man. What made him even handier was the fact that he was alone so that he was assigned to a trailer within the yard and thus was always available to look after things. Jim Wilson did the janitorial work in good style.

The Shop continued on at this time with Hap Vacher in general charge and Jimmy Goodwin as foreman. Ralph Shaffer was the office boss and Thelma Shaffer (no relation) the Shop Steno. Shop 9 accounting was done in the District Office under Jim Joyce with Edith Shaffer (Ralph's wife) the only Shop 9 full time accounting employee under Joyce. Herb Yunker and Verne Meacham handled the stores part of the Shop while various mechanics such as Jim Webb, Harold Kelly, Walt Keough, Johnny Pitts, Ham Hamilton and Ernest Olsen kept Jim Goodwin a-hopping.

In the maintenance field the three superintendents were operating as usual. Superintendent Carter at Crestview had Frances Sangster and Lillian Stedman in his office with foremen spread around the territory as follows: Art Durrant at Benton Station; Pop Wells at McGee Creek; Percy Goforth at Crestview; Cliff Donnelly at Conway Summit and Lee Harvey at Sonora Junction.

At Independence Ivadell Smith was the Timekeeper for Superintendent Nilius. Foremen were Carl Cleland at Bishop; Ray Cummings at Big Pine; Jim Olds at Independence; Ray Morgan at Keeler; Dominik Wiget at Panamint Springs and Frank Fox at Shoshone. Substations at Deep Springs and at Death Valley Junction were operated by Leadingmen with Raymond Fudge at Deep Springs and James L. McCreary out in the desert.

Superintendent Holt had Andy Bossick as his office man in Mojave. Two foremen operated out of Mojave with Earl Compton going both east and west while Joseph Bellatti worked north and south. Jack Warner was the foreman at Homestead; Walt Stewart at Olancho and Alvin Theobald at Weldon.

This quite properly brings to an end another era in the saga of District IX and also rings down the curtain on this volume. Forty years after Governor Gillette proclaimed this east of the mountains highway to be El Camino Sierra the horseless carriages were running up and down this ribbon of asphalt in ever increasing numbers and in fact fulfilling the destiny of the dreamers of so many years ago. Although now bereft of its descriptive and colorful Spanish name the highway was the sole economic lifeline of the Inyo-Mona area. No regular rail service served Inyo County and not even a narrow

gauge railroad reached Mono County. No scheduled air flights poked their noses into the two counties. The truckers were the only bona fide source of commercial transportation to the area.

The highway brought the tourists into the two counties and from the always increasing number of tourists did the natives prosper in catering to their needs. The magic thrill of the high country, the fighting fish, the bounteous gift of nature in scenery, climate and ruggedness in the abundance of her flora and fauna provide a setting for a way of life that just cannot be duplicated. World travelers have long paid homage to this area as having no equal anywhere. Mt. Whitney, Death Valley, Mono Lake, Crowley Lake, Devil's Postpile, Alabama Hills, Owens Valley, Mammoth Mountain and Lakes, June Lake, Bodie, Panamint, the Mojave Desert, Red Rock Canyon, Convict Lake - all are names with which to conjure and all are shared with the world by the highways - the highways of District IX.

APPENDIX A

DISTRICT ENGINEER

Francis G. Somner	October	11, 1923	May	31, 1932
John W. Vickrey	June	1, 1932	August	31, 1933
Spencer W. Lowden	September	1, 1933	September	30, 1950
Alan S. Hart	October	1, 1950		

DISTRICT MAINTENANCE ENGINEER

R. K. Forrest	October	18, 1928	June	27, 1929
Preston L. Fite	June	28, 1929	April	30, 1935
Clarence C. Cleman	May	1, 1935	March	15, 1941
James H. Hodges	March	16, 1941	July	31, 1947
Joseph R. Jarvis	August	1, 1947	August	22, 1948
Merle E. Fischer	August	23, 1948		

DISTRICT OFFICE ENGINEER

L. E. McDougal	August	27, 1927	May	6, 1929
Cliff J. Temby	May	7, 1929	July	31, 1929
E. K. Guion	August	1, 1929	June	13, 1931
Harold M. Hansen	June	14, 1931	September	13, 1936
Milton Harris	September	14, 1936	April	30, 1938

Position Abolished

DISTRICT CHIEF CLERK

M. L. Wilson	December	1, 1923	July	6, 1925
Comte O'Connell	July	7, 1925	March	1927
T. M. Hannon	March	1927	May	1928
W. J. Reilly	May	1928	August	27, 1933
T. M. Hannon	August	28, 1933	November	29, 1933
Almeda K. Wheeler	November	30, 1933	January	25, 1942
James L. Joyce	January	26, 1942	December	2, 1942
Charles Delee	December	3, 1942	October	5, 1943
James L. Joyce	October	6, 1943		

DISTRICT RIGHT OF WAY AGENT

W. J. Abrams	March	1928	August	1929
F. A. Strock	September	1929	August	1930
J. B. Woodson	September	1930	September	1933
Francis Baker	April	9, 1934	February	14, 1942
Serge Ray	February	15, 1942		

DISTRICT PERSONNEL CLERK

Eldred Kelly	August	15, 1936	May	20, 1940
J. P. Brandenburg	June	16, 1940	December	1, 1941
Dorothy Dixon	December	2, 1941	December	22, 1942
Frank Faulkner	August	1943	July	1, 1945
Dorothy Dixon	November	19, 1945	January	31, 1952

MAINTENANCE SUPERINTENDENT - INDEPENDENCE

Ben Gallagher	September 1, 1930	August 31, 1933
Dwight Wonacott	September 1, 1933	October 9, 1941
Charles Harbey	October 10, 1941	December 31, 1944
Curtis T. Warren	January 1, 1945	November 18, 1946
Martin Nilius	December 1, 1946	

MAINTENANCE SUPERINTENDENT - CRESTVIEW

Dwight Wonacott	September 1, 1930	August 31, 1933
George McIvor	September 1, 1933	November 30, 1935
Joseph Lemos	December 1, 1935	June 30, 1940
Tom Buell	July 1, 1940	July 1942
James Burke	August 10, 1942	November 15, 1944
Charles Delee	November 16, 1944	December 31, 1944
Charles P. Carter	January 1, 1945	

MAINTENANCE SUPERINTENDENT - MOJAVE

Grant P. Merrill	September 1, 1933	June 15, 1945
Charles Delee	June 16, 1945	August 5, 1945
Herman Holt	August 6, 1945	

SHOP 9 SUPERINTENDENT

M. E. Mihills	February 1, 1926	June 10, 1928
M. P. Brooks	June 11, 1928	September 16, 1931
F. F. Green	October 1, 1931	September 1933
John Stein	September 1933	January 4, 1942
O. R. Thompson	January 5, 1942	June 30, 1942
George E. Siebert	July 1, 1942	April 3, 1948
William J. Millard	April 17, 1948	December 14, 1949
Freeman L. Vacher	December 15, 1949	

SHOP 9 FOREMAN

O. C. Collins	February 1, 1926	April 30, 1927
Harry Williams	May 1, 1927	March 31, 1928
Ralph Hildebrand	April 11, 1928	January 31, 1936
L. E. Bramhall	February 1, 1936	August 31, 1937
Al Latour	September 1, 1937	December 31, 1938
James H. Goodwin	January 1, 1939	